

Tuesday May 7 1996

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Britain threatens to hit back over Russian 'spy' expulsions

The looking glass war

James Meek in Moscow and Richard Norton-Taylor

THE MOST serious crisis in British-Russian relations since the end of the cold war was looming last night as the Foreign Office warned it would retaliate against the threatened expulsion of up to nine British diplomats from Moscow for alleged espionage.

Russia's threat to expel the Britons came after a triumphant announcement by the Federal Security Service (FSB) — the intelligence agency which succeeded the KGB — that it had arrested an English spy in the act of broadcasting secret information to his controllers in London.

Russia's deputy foreign minister, Sergei Krylov, confirmed that there would be expulsions, but he refused to specify the number of Britons who would be ordered to pack their bags.

Grigory Karasin, Mr Krylov's spokesman, said last night that the incident should not be dramatised, but there could be an announcement from Moscow today.

"Such cases sometimes happen in relations between countries," a ministry spokesman told the Interfax news agency.

"The official representative of the foreign ministry expressed the hope that the incident will not affect Russian-British relations," Interfax said.

In London, a Foreign Office spokesman warned that any expulsions would be met with an "appropriate response" — a clear threat of retaliation.

Last night, Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, — who earlier in the day had spoken to the Prime Minister, John Major, about the affair — warned Moscow that Britain would consider taking action if it were expelled British diplomats.

Mr Rifkind said nine diplomats might be affected.

The Foreign Secretary said allegations that the diplomats — whose names were given to Sir Andrew Wood, the British ambassador in Moscow — were involved in "improper activities" were totally unjustified. The FO said Russia had



It's the Kremlin, do we know what's going on?

produced no evidence to back up the claims.

Mr Krylov said he had summoned Sir Andrew, but would not comment on the tone or content of their meeting, referring journalists to the FSB.

The dominant role of the FSB in advertising the arrest of the alleged agent, a Russian citizen, and the undiplomatic language used by its spokesman, Alexander Zdanovich, mark a breach with past protocol when Russia's foreign ministry has announced expulsions.

Mr Zdanovich did use the old euphemism for diplomat-spies, saying the Britons would be expelled "for activities incompatible with their diplomatic status".

But he rendered the phrase unnecessary by going on to call the diplomats "regular English intelligence agents who, under the cover of diplomatic duties for the British Embassy in Russia, maintained contact with the exposed agent".

Russia's current foreign minister, Yevgeny Primakov, is himself a former intelligence chief.

Mr Zdanovich said the arrested man, who has not been named, had worked for the federal government in Moscow. He was detained last month.

"The arrested man had direct access to secret information and passed on to British intelligence information of a political and strategic defence character," Mr Zdanovich said.

He said the man had been recruited in the mid-1980s and had received material reward from Britain.

The alleged spy, who is



A Russian militiaman guards the British embassy in Moscow while in the Kremlin and in London the spy row grows

being held in Lefortovo prison, Moscow, has been charged under article 64 of Russia's criminal code, Betrayal Of The Motherland, which carries a potential death sentence.

Another FSB spokesman, Boris Kostenko, said: "The man was seized red-handed as he was in the process of communicating with his headquarters." The agency said

that, under interrogation, the agent had confessed to being a spy for Britain.

In February this year a businessman, Nigel Shakespeare, one of 11 British diplomats and journalists expelled from Moscow in 1989 when he was working as a military attaché at the embassy, was deported from Russia for the second time.

Last year, a Russian journalist was asked to leave Britain.

Russian security services suspect that the relative ease with which Western businessmen come and go from Russia, often visiting formerly restricted or closed areas and meeting with people who previously would have required security clearance to talk to foreigners, is being abused by

overseas intelligence agencies.

Tension caused by the latest incident could adversely affect the hundreds of Britons who do business in Russia. Firms such as BP, ICI, Rolls Royce and Cadbury Schweppes, as well as many less well-known companies, are increasingly operating in the country.

PHOTOGRAPH: GRIGORY DUKOR

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Tax break for Tory MPs

David Hencke Westminster Correspondent

THE Inland Revenue has granted a £400,000 tax amnesty to about 20 Conservative MPs, some of whom claimed car mileage and depreciation allowances for parliamentary business while using company cars.

At the heart of the issue are the parliamentary rules governing the generous 60p to 74p mileage rates for MPs. One unnamed Tory MP who claimed for three company cars at different addresses has saved £30,000-£40,000 in tax, interest and penalties.

The revelation comes on the day of publication for the first Register of MPs' Interests based on new rules following the Nolan committee report on sleaze.

Details of the tax amnesty came to light after a retired tax inspector, David Benny, who handled MPs' and directors' income tax, complained to Lord Nolan about the Inland Revenue's action.

In a letter placed in the Public Records Office by the Nolan committee, he says: "I was personally involved during 1983 and 1994 in the aftermath of approaches by a number of MPs to a government minister who intervened on their behalf with the Board of Inland Revenue. As a result the board absolved these MPs from liabilities to income tax, interest, and, very likely in some cases, penalties as well."

Treasury Ministers are livid about Mr Benny's complaint but do not deny a meeting between Tory MPs and Stephen Dorrell, the financial secretary to the Treasury, on the general point of tax law affecting MPs' car allowances. Later Michael Stern, an accountant and Conservative MP for Bristol North West, appealed on another MP's behalf to the Revenue commissioners and won a case with repercussions on other tax investigations into MPs' allowances.

The MPs' mileage rate is Turn to page 2, column 7

NHS market 'leading to meltdown' as trusts resist funding squeeze

David Brindle, Social Services Correspondent

LEADERS of NHS trusts have warned Stephen Dorrell, the Health Secretary, that the health service is facing the deepest crisis since the Government introduced the internal market.

One trust chief executive has said financial pressures are so severe that there is a prospect of "meltdown" in parts of the service.

The problems come after a winter of bed shortages in many areas, recalled the annual review of contracts between health authority purchasers and trust providers was supposed to end.

Trouble next winter in the run-up to a spring general election is foreshadowed by what has been, by common consent, the most difficult contracting round between trusts and authorities since the market started in 1991.

The Government has given authorities in England £23.2 billion for hospital and community services in 1996/97, a real increase in funding of 1.1 per cent. But it has again ordered "efficiency savings" of 3 per cent.

To meet spiralling demand for health care, while keeping waiting times no longer than 12 months, many authorities have asked trusts to deliver more care for little or no increase in their contract prices.

Disputes have broken out across the country and many contracts remain unsigned six weeks into the financial year. In east London, non-emergency hospital appointments have been frozen because of a stand-off between the Newham Healthcare trust and its local health authority.

In Scotland, the Raigmore hospital trust in Inverness told the Highland health board to state publicly which services it was expected to cut to meet a standard budget.

According to the NHS Trust

Federation, which met Mr Dorrell last week, problems are "worse than ever before".

Richard James, chief executive of the Gloucestershire-based Severn trust, is quoted in the federation's newsletter as "having described the position as 'extremely grave'". He warned of "meltdown" in a number of areas in the health service in the not-too-distant future.

Mr James is said to have told the federation's ruling council: "We are hearing about huge differences between purchasers and providers, amounting to millions of pounds. These problems are real and serious. They are not shroud-waving."

Ross Tristram, the federation's director, said the deputation which had seen Mr Dorrell had left him in no doubt about the severity of the difficulties facing trusts. "I think he was aware that it has been a difficult contracting round. I suspect he has taken on board the fact that it is not going to be possible to

get a quart out of a pint pot."

The federation and the Department of Health were collecting evidence of problems and the two sides would meet for further talks.

"A lot of people who say they have not got a problem are funding this year out of non-recurring cash," Mr Tristram said. "These people are going to hit the problems next year."

Health authorities acknowledge that services may suffer through having to focus on the twin priorities of treating emergency patients and meeting the 12-month waiting time target for non-urgent cases.

Philip Hunt, director of the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts, last week told a conference of Unison, the biggest NHS union: "There are very wide gaps this year on contracts. We have been producing efficiency savings year on year and there must come a point at which we have cut out all the excess padding and we end up cutting services."

Big Apple seeks to curb cab drivers' notorious rudeness

Ian Katz in New York

IT IS ONE of the immutable certainties of modern urban life: cabbies in New York are always rude. But now the city's authorities are attempting to teach them good manners.

Henceforth, trainee cabbies — whose grasp of English rarely matches their command of obscenity — will be taught 50 courteous phrases such as: "I'm sorry if you think I am driving too fast, sir/madam. I will slow down immediately."

The Taxi and Limousine Commission's initiative is the latest in its long battle to smarten up the image of New York's yellow cabs.

It has incorporated the use of phrases such as "Thank you for hailing me, sir/madam" into the two-hour exam which all cabbies must pass.

Instead of the expletives which typically follows the proffering of a large denomination bill, cabbies will be encouraged to say: "I am sorry but I am not required to change a \$50 bill."

News of the initiative had, by yesterday, evidently not

Rank words

What they should say: "It is my pleasure to place your bags in the trunk."

What they say: "It's open."

What they should say: "I am sorry, I may not make a U-turn, sir (madam), as it is illegal. But I will be sure to get you to your destination as quickly as possible."

What they say: "Whadayoumean U-turn? You want I lose licence?"

What they should say: "May I help you into the building, madam/sir?"

What they say: "This you call a tip?"

reached some cabbies. Mohamed Hassan, who has driven a cab since arriving from Egypt nine years ago, said: "Taxi driver treat the people very nice but people treat the taxi driver very bad."

M D Hossain, from Bangladesh, said: "I talk to passengers all the time, but I have a lot who get in the cab and treat me like an animal."

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Prague Writers' Festival 1996

This year the Prague Writers' Festival, directed by Michael March, will once again showcase a selection of fine authors from around the world. Meet them at the Viola Theatre, Národní 7, (nearest metro Narodni) from May 9-11. For more details call: 44 171 7134133

Thursday May 9
 Sylva Fischerová - Czech Republic
 Andrzej Sosnowski - Poland
 Evelyn Schlag - Austria
 Nuno Júdice - Portugal

Friday May 10
 Paul Durcan - Ireland
 John F. Deane - Ireland
 James Kelman - Scotland
 R.S. Thomas - Wales

Saturday May 11
 Ewald Murrer - Czech Republic
 Jim Barnes - USA
 Abdullah al-Udhari - Yemen
 Natan Zach - Israel

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Sketch

New party mould for the jelly set



Martin Wainwright

INK and wobbly things have an affinity with May Day holidays, whether marching in miners' galas or forming as concepts in the minds of socialist dreamers.

In the accommodating world of New Labour, however, what could be more suitable, pink and quivering than luscious jellies — spread out for eager queues at the National Jelly Festival for 1996?

"Mummy look — a jelly fish!" punned Amy Taylor, of Bradford, stretching to her full, eight-year-old height in the vast kitchens of Harewood House, Lord Harewood's stately home on the edge of Leeds.

Review

Surpassing all expectations

Edward Greenfield

Maazel premiere Pittsburgh

WHEN Lorin Maazel announced his plan last year to spend more time composing, after retiring as music director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, few really believed him.

able and accommodating star. Mr Brears observed to a head-nodding 71 party of jelly experts: "What other substance can you think of which can be transparent, opaque, absorb any colour or flavour and sets to any shape you want?" Outside politics, they knew of none.

There was, however, one flaw — in spite of the fantastic shapes and designs of the festival jellies, from Amy's transparent jellypond with fish and underwater plants to a patriotic Danish jelly — red with a white jelly cross inside, so that every slice resembled the national flag.

"How do you get a jelly out of this mould without it breaking?" asked an anxious punter, though it was unlikely he was thinking of the SDP's mould-breakers.

"Don't use Pyrex, don't use pottery, don't use plastic," was the best Mr Brears could do — copper or glass are the nearest thing to an answer. Faces round the table fell, all admitting to cupboards stacked with plastic space-ship, rabbit and Ninja Turtle moulds like the one in a corner of Mr Brears' display.

Upstairs, in the dining room overseen by endless oil-painted Earls of Harewood, a rosy-cheeked mum dressed as a Victorian serving girl supervised a festive table set for 20 jelly maniacs. "I couldn't eat another jelly," she said, weakly offering round a potent Christmas pudding version (raisins and mince meat encased in glaze) for a general sniff. "I've been eating it since Saturday morning."

Wagging Laura Bowen, from Nottingham, nipped in and noticed the poor woman trembling under the weight of her plates: "Is that why you're shaking?"

Like New Labour, man continues to push forward the frontiers of jelly technology, with scientists at Rowntree's Nestlé in York trying to pinpoint exactly why the gelatinous fruit pastille pastilles so well.

Review

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Porter's curiosity delivers Maximilian from antique obscurity

EDWARD DIXON with the 16th century medal he found trapped behind a drawer in a table due to be auctioned.

"It's a game the porters play — seeing if there are any more secret drawers," he said. "I was examining the way it was made and took out one of the drawers. I happened to bend down and at the very back saw something caught under a piece of paper."

lead foil from the top of an old wine bottle, but after he had extracted the object with Sellotape fixed to the end of a ruler, the medal department identified it as a silver medal struck for the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I by Hans Reinhart the Elder in the mid-1500s.

tion, in 1994, fetched £8,250. The medal will be sold together with other Renaissance plaquettes in the art and antiques collection of Sylvia Adams, the owner of the table. The collection is expected to fetch £3 million over the next fortnight.

Brown determined to press on with axing older pupils' benefit

Rebecca Smithers Political Correspondent

THE shadow chancellor, Gordon Brown, indicated yesterday that he intends to press ahead with controversial proposals to scrap child benefit for 16 to 19-year-olds, despite the furious opposition of left-wing members of the Shadow Cabinet, who fear a weakening of Labour's commitment to helping children stay on at school.



Gordon Brown ... action, or 'problems will haunt us'

that will haunt us for many years to come." Mr Brown is particularly unhappy about the unfairness of the current system, with a quarter of the recipients of the 16 to 19-year-olds in private education.

The plans have alarmed some of the "soft left" — notably Mr Smith, David Blunkett, the shadow education secretary, and the shadow trade and industry secretary Margaret Beckett.

Labour party sources stressed that a final decision was months away. The Social Security Secretary, Peter Lilley, said Labour's welfare reforms were "a big disaster".

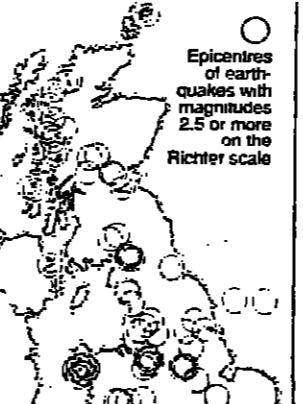
to an integrated Europe, while expressing some caution by stressing the importance of reforms to areas such as the Common Agriculture Policy. In a speech to German finance ministers and businessmen at the Frederick Ebert Foundation in Bonn, Mr Brown will attack "the opponents of greater European co-operation (who) use today's failures as an argument for less co-operation. It is these people who have captured the Conservative Party and used the term 'European' as a term of abuse".

When the music stops, page 9

Earthquake rattles crockery in the Potteries

Tim Radford Science Editor

THE earthquake that rattled crockery in the Potteries, set off security alarms and shocked people awake at Burslem at 4.50am yesterday registered 2.6 on the Richter scale.



shallow. We have not heard of any damage to buildings; it was not violent enough for that, but it was enough to wake thousands of people and upset animals and pets.

"I was in bed when I was awakened by a sound like a door banging. The whole house and bed shook," said Gilbert Leek, aged 68, from Hanley. "We have had small tremors in this part of the world before, but people are not really worried."

Seismologists at the British Geological Survey (BGS) in Edinburgh said: "That is a classic description of a primary wave, reflecting into a sound wave and causing the bang. It was followed by a secondary wave which caused shaking and rattling."

Most British earthquakes are much less violent than the ones that shook Kobe in Japan, Northridge in California or Maharashtra in India in recent years. There have been a number of magnitude 6 earthquakes in the North Sea, but the largest earthquake on land — at 5.4 — was in Gwynedd in 1984.

Clampdown on schools in inner city

Donald MacLeod Education Correspondent

SCHOOL inspectors are to be given sweeping powers to investigate education authorities where standards of reading and numeracy are low.

Gillian Shephard, the Education and Employment Secretary, will announce the move in an attempt to focus growing concern over literacy at primary schools on Labour-run inner city council areas.

A report by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) showing that eight out of 10 seven-year-olds in the London boroughs of Islington, Southwark and Tower Hamlets are behind in reading has been criticised as politically slanted by the authorities who collaborated in the study.

But Mrs Shephard is backing Chris Woodhead, the head of Ofsted, who redrafted the report and sharpened its criticisms to the fury of the boroughs. Now Mr Woodhead, as HM Chief Inspector, will be given powers to investigate standards across an authority as well as inspect individual schools.

After the publication of today's report it is inconceivable that other authorities will volunteer to produce joint studies with Ofsted. Mrs Shephard will make it clear that inspectors will be given powers to conduct similar investigations in inner city areas.

As well as turning the spotlight on Labour-run councils, Conservatives hope the report will embarrass the Labour leadership. Tony Blair, who lives in Islington, and Harriet Harman, the party's health spokeswoman, who lives in Southwark, rejected the option of local secondary schools for their children.

Labour sources said yesterday that Mrs Shephard was trying to catch up with its own published plans for Ofsted and the Audit Commission to investigate education authorities. Under the proposals, authorities would have to produce development plans to raise standards on the model of Labour-run Birmingham.

"Gillian Shephard is showing a belated interest in literacy having axed the reading recovery programme. The real issue is how standards of literacy are improved in these boroughs. They are already developing schemes and will get on with the job whether or not she is playing political football with the report," said the source.

Anne Worsley, chairman of Southwark's education committee, criticised Mr Woodhead's "pre-planned political agenda". The draft report had been altered from a version which was helpful to teachers and schools to one intended to make political capital, she said.

Phil Kelly, Islington's education chairman, said the borough had instigated a £1 million literacy programme to improve the teaching of reading in its 87 primary schools. "What authorities need is assistance in improving our teaching technique, not another whinge Mr Woodhead is as much use in the battle for higher standards as a chocolate teapot — he should resign."

Concern over reading standards began to grow with the publication of last year's national test results for 11-year-olds in which half failed to reach the target level.

Tory MPs granted £400,000 tax amnesty over company car use

continued from page 1

high because it is designed to buy a new car every three years and covers maintenance and insurance as well as petrol. But MPs who are given company cars as a director's perk or charge their car to their businesses have none of the costs of replacement, tax or insurance.

Nick Brown, former shadow financial secretary to the Treasury, said: "I would think it a considerable abuse of an MP's position to seek a meeting with Treasury ministers to discuss the taxation of MPs' allowances."

"It also raises the question about whether MPs are getting a double benefit for the depreciation of the car." The situation came to light when tax officials spotted that some MPs were claiming their parliamentary mileage allowance while getting the perks of a company car. The Revenue demanded income tax at 40 per cent on the parliamentary mileage as a benefit in kind. In some cases it sought seven years' back tax.

This deal means Mr Dorell will agree to meet Mr Stern and another unnamed Tory MP on behalf of up to 30 Conservatives. Mr Stern told the Guardian: "It was strictly on the general application of the law to try to clarify the position of whether the allowance applied to an MP's own car or to any other car. It was unsuccessful... So I later appealed over the issue and I got a ruling that it could apply to any other car."

Michael Jack, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, said: "The ministers concerned and the Inland Revenue are clear that members did not receive more favourable tax treatment." Since the ruling, MPs with company cars have negotiated lower mileage rates with the Commons fees office.

Open political ala... lets

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1985 Oleg Gordievsky, a former KGB agent in London, escapes to Britain from Moscow, after a decade of spying for MI6.

1989 11 British diplomats and journalists are expelled from the Soviet Union in a tit-for-tat after Britain expelled the same number of alleged Soviet spies, shortly after Gorbachev made an apparently successful visit to Britain.

1991 Foreign secretary Douglas Hurd tells Russia to end its "large-scale intelligence activity" in Britain.



1993 Michael Smith, electronics engineer, is sentenced to 25 years for passing secrets to Russia, including details of Britain's nuclear-weapons programme. He had been recruited 20

years earlier by Victor Oschenko, a KGB agent who defected to Britain in 1992.



1994, Feb Aldrich Ames, a senior CIA officer, is arrested and accused of selling secrets to Moscow since 1985, when he exposed Gordievsky and 13 CIA agents in Russia.

1994, March Vadim Sintsov, a Russian working for the equivalent of Britain's Defence Research Agency confesses to passing secrets to MI6.

1994, April Moscow expels John Scarlett, whom it describes as head of MI6 station in Russia. Britain expels Russian embassy official in London in tit-for-tat.

1995 Alexander Malikov, London correspondent for Russian TV station, Ostankino, expelled.



1995 Russian Federal Security Service claims to have identified and expelled more than 50 foreign agents.

1996, Feb Moscow deports a British businessman, Nigel Shakespear. He was also among those expelled in 1989, when he was Britain's assistant military attache.

1996, March MI5 says Russian intelligence services "have renewed their efforts to post intelligence officers in London".

Open season puts cat among mice

Political alarm as chaos lets in spies

David Hearst in Moscow and Richard Norton-Taylor

WHATEVER else Boris Yeltsin's destruction of the Soviet Union has achieved in the last five years, one fact remains clear: it has provided a field day for Western intelligence services out to recruit informers in the once potent Russian military-industrial complex.

Two years ago, the Russian federal counter intelligence service (FCS) announced it had uncovered more spies in 1994 than in the previous five to seven years. According to the FCS, after the KGB was dismantled in 1991 with its major services being centralised, the world's leading intelligence agencies enjoyed an opportunity of "almost untroubled" operation in Russia, establishing networks sweeping over the Russian state and its political structures.

All the conditions necessary to recruit foreign agents remained: loss of the state's authority, poor territorial integrity and the emergence of Russia's so-called "glass borders", poor wages, and a world turned upside down where street traders could earn more than a nuclear physicist.

Above all, patriotic Russians lost their national pride, the self-belief in a tran-

sitional period which was more a revolution than a turbulent reform.

The chaos of post-communist reform provided conditions analogous to the Soviet Union's most effective recruitment period in Western Europe, the collapse of Nazi Germany. Leonid Shebarshin, the last head of KGB's First Chief Directorate, the largest spy network in the world, said the same was now happening now in reverse.

In today's Russia, with only six weeks to go before a pivotal election, there are powerful political reasons why the old KGB empire may be feeling the need to strike back at the level of foreign infiltration. Mikhail Barsukov, the head of the Federal Security Service (FSB), responsible for uncovering and arresting the Russian who allegedly confessed to working for MI6, is himself in a need of good publicity.

Mr Barsukov has not enjoyed a good reign since he emerged from beneath the patronage of Lt General Alexander Korzhakov, the head of the presidential bodyguard, to take the most politically exposed job in the "force ministries". The last time he took personal command of an operation was against Chechen hostage takers — and that ended in humiliation.

Earlier this year, Mr Yeltsin accused western intelligence agencies of undermin-



Mikhail Barsukov (top left), head of the organisation that arrested a Russian who allegedly worked for MI6; Alexander Korzhakov, head of the presidential bodyguard; and the British embassy in Moscow

ing Russia's military potential and of organising a brain drain of the country's most talented military scientists. Before an election it is important to show the FSB is active. As the Russian proverb goes when talking about someone who is not doing his job well: "He is not catching mice." By catching a British spy, the FSB is showing that the Russian cat is not entirely asleep. "The FSB is looking for a spy at any price," Oleg Gordievsky, the KGB defector now living in Britain, said last night. "A political gesture in the middle of an elec-



tion campaign shows that Yeltsin is patriotic and wary about the West." According to the FSB's published statements, western intelligence agencies are primarily interested in Russia's strategy in future co-operation with other countries in its Confederation of Independent States. They want to know how Russia plans to respond to the eastward expansion of Nato, as well as the potential capability of its nuclear programme and high technology military-industrial base.

This, says the FSB, places the underpaid workers of the defence ministry's industrial complex at risk. Russia still has many high technology secrets, particularly in the field of light metal alloy technology for use in its own stealth weapons programme. Russia also has a lead in low-flying aqua-planes, a technology being developed in its defence factories in Nizhni Novgorod. The West is seeking better control of Russia's nuclear stockpile. It wants to know how much weapons-grade plutonium and high enriched uranium are being held as a result of the dismantling of its

intercontinental ballistic missile fleet. Since the end of the cold war, MI6 has reduced the amount of resources devoted to Russia by two-thirds. A clue to its priorities is contained in a recent report from parliament's intelligence and security committee. It said that while Whitehall's intelligence analysts did not believe Russia posed any "direct military threat", it retained "a formidable strategic capability". It added that Russian military equipment was being "aggressively marketed around the world".

A throwback to the bad old days

Ian Black Diplomatic Editor

ANGLORUSSIAN relations have undergone a sea-change since the end of the cold war, but yesterday's expulsion of diplomats from the British embassy in Moscow is a chilly throwback to the bad old days.

Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, has repeatedly said that Britain's greatest international concern is stability in Russia — facing a key test as Boris Yeltsin is challenged by Gennady Zyuganov, the communist candidate, in next month's presidential elections.

Specifically, Britain worries about effective control of Russia's still-mighty nuclear arsenal and, generally, about the continuation of the country's reform process, personified by Mr Yeltsin. Suggestions at the weekend that the June 16 election might be postponed caused alarm.

Yet the dangers of identifying too closely with President Yeltsin were underlined during last month's Moscow summit. Publicly endorsing Mr Yeltsin, the Prime Minister, John Major, was given a none-too-subtle hint by Mr Zyuganov to stay out of Russia's internal affairs. On the face of it, things

have changed beyond recognition since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Queen's visit to Moscow and St Petersburg in October 1994 set the tone of a new level of relations.

Britain has worked hard within the European Union to build friendly ties with Russia, but sharp disagreements over Bosnia, the war in Chechnya and angry reactions from Moscow to Nato expansion have caused frictions.

Bilaterally, Britain has helped Russia's transition to a free-market economy and has backed generous loans from the International Monetary Fund. Royal Air Force crews have inspected Russian airfields and British ministers have boarded nuclear-powered ships on the Kola peninsula. There has even been quiet co-operation between the two countries' intelligence and security services in areas such as terrorism and organised crime.

But Britain has found that its ability to influence Russia's policies is extremely limited as Moscow takes a more assertive view of its international role. Last night, allegations of spying were being seen in the wider context of Russia's volatile domestic politics, but the episode will fuel concern that the broader relationship with Britain is becoming fragile.

Pilgrims pay homage to the man with the golden shares

Mark Tran in Omaha

THERE was a time when the annual meeting of Berkshire Hathaway, the nominally successful investment company run by Warren Buffett, was a cosy affair. But now the event has taken on the trappings of the Super Bowl as thousands make the pilgrimage to Omaha.

Mr Buffett, who recently overtook Microsoft's Bill Gates as America's richest man, has a net worth of \$16.6 billion (£11 billion) according to Forbes magazine. The annual meeting's festivities traditionally begin with Saturday's baseball game, featuring the Omaha Royals, partly owned by Mr Buffett of course.

That was followed by Sunday's reception for more than 6,000 shareholders at Berkshire's jewellery store, where a queue snaked past the world's biggest diamond, the Golden Jubilee, a 545-carat monster on loan from Thailand.

Yesterday, in the huge Palace ballroom of the Holiday Inn Convention Centre, Mr Buffett, with his partner and friend Charlie Munger at his side, got down to business, answering questions from early morning until the afternoon. The event has ballooned to

such an extent, that three overflow rooms were booked and most people watched Mr Buffett on six giant video screens, prompting one of the elderly stockholders to complain that the Legend was losing touch with reality.

In this year's letter to his shareholders he compared his two-pronged approach of either buying entire companies or buying a modest percentage to a line from Woody Allen: "The real advantage of being bisexual is that it doubles your chance for a date on a Saturday night." Mr Buffett has a penchant for Hollywood lines, also quoting Mase West: "It's not what you've got — it's what you do with what you've got."

You usually hear two refrains from investors in Berkshire Hathaway, which has invested in insurance, newspapers, and consumer product companies; they wish they had bought more and earlier. Most of the shareholders at the annual meeting own one, two or three shares — Berkshire Hathaway shares are the most expensive on Wall Street, going for well over \$50,000 (£30,000) a share. If someone had invested \$10,000 (£6,700) with Mr Buffett when he began in Omaha in 1956 and stuck with him he would have about \$58 million (£32 million) today.

During the promotion of the heavyweight title fight between Lennox Lewis and Tony Tucker, Maloney became the subject of a 'sustained and ferocious campaign of vilification' from the court of Don King

G2 page 4

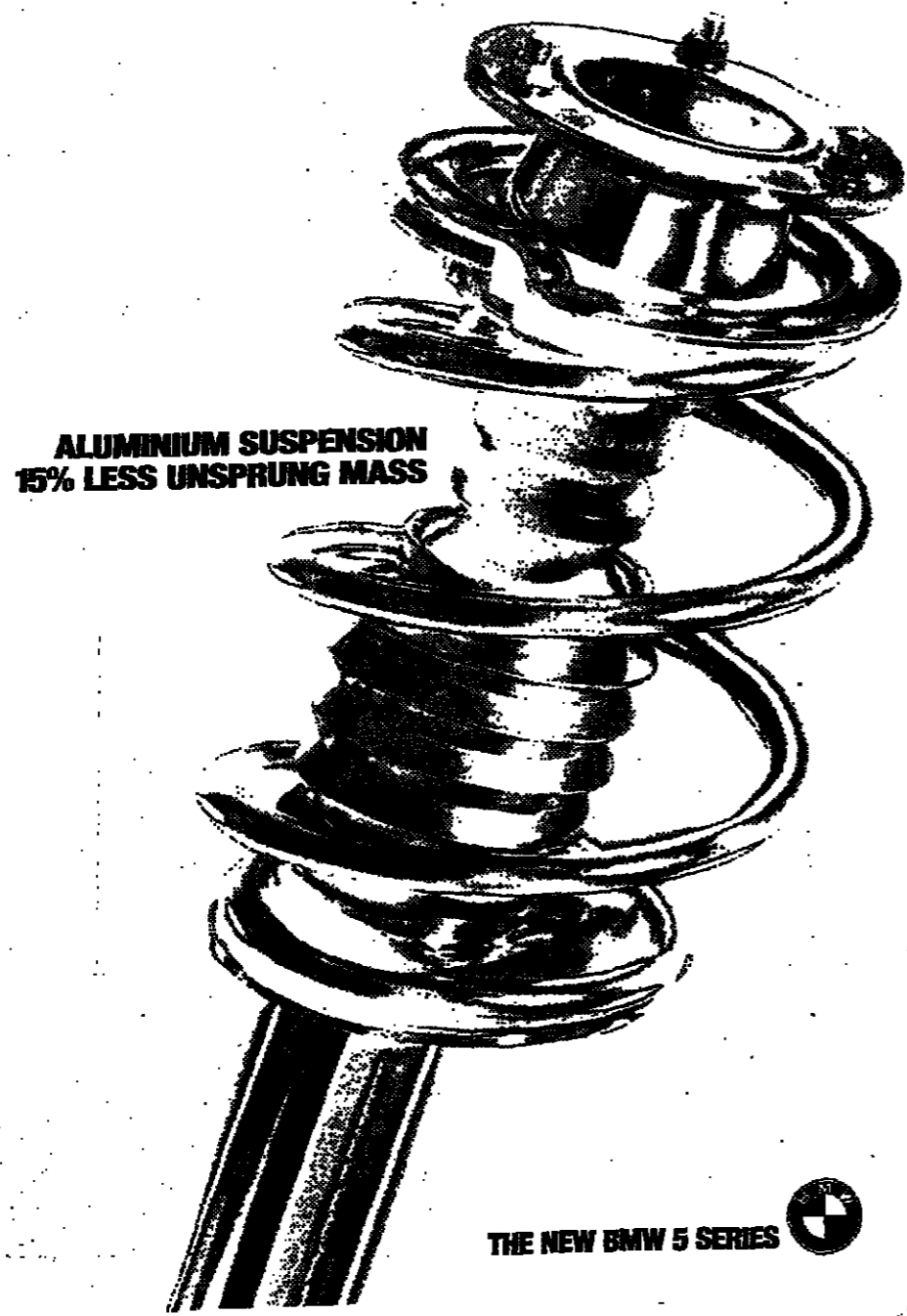
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Detectives to be given spy rights

Owen Bowcott and Duncan Campbell

A CRIME bill to be introduced this autumn will provide statutory powers for detectives to plant listening devices or hidden cameras in the homes of suspects.

But the bill, which will also establish a national crime squad, may not harmonise police powers with those of MI5, the Home Office admitted yesterday.

Reform of system triggered by the case of Sultan Khan

Home Secretary. The police have been hiding bugs and video equipment under Home Office guidelines introduced in 1984 which require the authority of only a chief constable. There is no statutory framework and evidence derived from electronic bugs is being challenged in the courts as inadmissible.

senior police officers pressed for a unified system, with police and MI5 being granted permission by a court. But MI5 preserved its relationship with the Home Secretary as the sole authority for its bugging warrants.

The civil rights organisation Liberty has criticised the Home Secretary being given such wide discretion. "We would want a decision on a [bugging] warrant made by a circuit judge," John Wadham, the director of Liberty, said yesterday.

Bill Taylor, chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers' crime committee, said: "We are concerned that in the absence of any legislation, we have a twin-track system: one where MI5 has a statutory basis and one where the police do not."

Detectives have tended to use bugs in cases where they have strong suspicions but are unable to prove a case. Bugs were used successfully last year after accountant Grant Price was kidnapped and killed, when a listening device placed in the home of a suspect was played to a jury and helped to convict him.

Devises were also used in the investigation of the murder of the young black man Stephen Lawrence. A camera and recorder were installed in the home of a suspect and violent racist remarks were recorded, but the case collapsed for other reasons 10 days ago.

During the investigation of Rosemary West, who was convicted of 10 murders last year, devices were hidden in the safe houses where she was kept after the arrest of her husband Fred and the discovery of bodies at her home in Gloucester. She made no incriminating remarks.

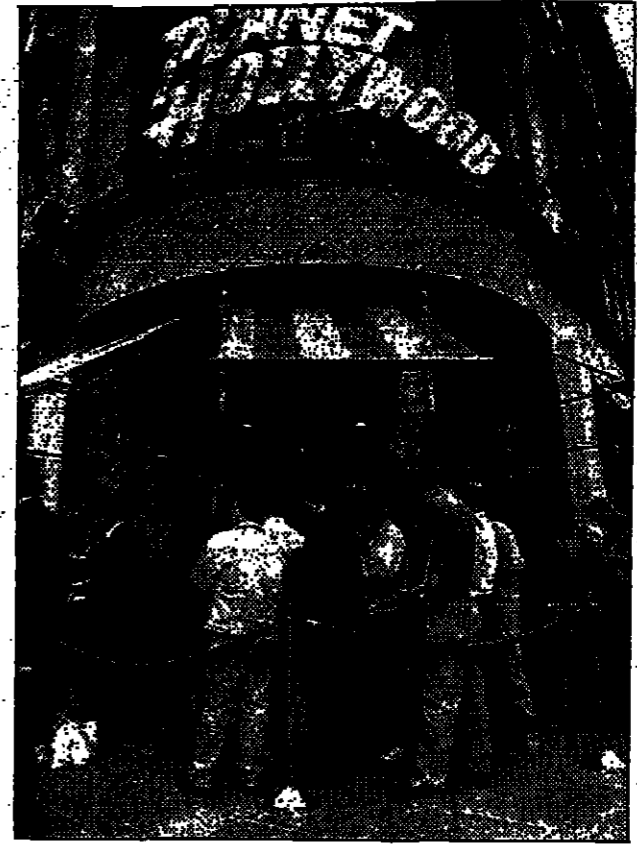
While the Price, Lawrence and West cases involved particularly unpleasant murders, the police are conscious there would be less public sympathy if they were to bug the homes of minor suspects or people whose alleged offences — such as animal rights or environmental activism — have a political perspective.

A Home Office spokeswoman yesterday confirmed that no decision has been made on whether police bugging warrants will be signed by the Home Secretary or approved by two judges.

Hold the fries, it's seconds out as supermodels face 'Rocky' Stallone in fast food battle



Naomi Campbell yesterday ceremonially starts building work on London's Fashion Café, due to open in the summer as a rival to the nearby branch (above right) of the Planet Hollywood chain



Sue Quinn

THE theme was more cuisine than couture, but hundreds of enthusiastic spectators did not seem to mind as supermodel Naomi Campbell officially launched the start of building work on Europe's first Fashion Café yesterday.

The venue, a foray into off-couture enterprise, by Campbell and fellow models Claudia Schiffer, Elle Macpherson and Christy Turlington, will be the latest seeking to serve London's growing appetite for themed restaurants.

The Fashion Café, curiously featuring the favourite dishes of the wafer-thin models, will also allow diners to muse over fashion memorabilia, including the Valentino wedding dress modelled by Sharon Stone and one of Madonna's bustiers.

Yesterday's launch signals the first round in the Fashion Café's fight to knock out Sylvester Stallone, co-owner of Planet Hollywood, whose hugely successful cinema theme restaurant is across the road from its site in Coventry Street, near Leicester Square.

Another theme restaurant competitor, the popular Sports Café, is nearby in the Haymarket.

The quartet of models has already established restaurants in New York and New Orleans, with others planned for Barcelona, Jakarta and Manila.

Loyalist bomb hoax in Dublin

David Sharrock Ireland Correspondent

THE loyalist ceasefire continued to disintegrate yesterday after an Ulster Volunteer Force bomb hoax at Dublin airport.

A controlled explosion was carried out on a car at the airport early yesterday, after a telephone warning using a

recognised code word was received by a Belfast newspaper. Irish army spokesmen confirmed that there were no explosives in the vehicle.

In the warning a man said mid-Ulster UVF volunteers had planted two 10lb Powergel bombs on the airport runway and in a car park.

The caller said the UVF "had overcome very high security" to plant the bombs.

"Your government have laughed off our words but they will not mock our deeds. The people of the Irish Republic will pay a very high price," the caller said.

David Irvine, leader of the Progressive Unionist Party, which has UVF links, said the hoax had "undoubtedly" emanated from that organisation.

"My hope is that they will rein back. There is still a loyalist ceasefire," he added.

Senior loyalists described the Dublin hoax as "a shot across the bows", although this could have been meant as much a warning to the UVF leadership as to the Irish government.

Loyalist dissent has been steadily growing since the IRA bombed Canary Wharf on February 9.

It has also exacerbated tensions between the UVF and the Ulster Defence Association, the larger paramilitary grouping, who together operate a council-style leadership

known as the Combined Loyalist Military Command. A senior UDA figure said there was considerable anger with the UVF for failing to consult them before the Dublin hoax.

Powergel is a commercial explosive used by the UVF in a number of bomb attacks before its October 1994 ceasefire.

In May that year it planted a bomb in a Dublin pub where a republican function was being held. It failed to go off. The loyalist terrorists shot dead an IRA man guarding the door.

A few days after the IRA began its ceasefire, the UVF exploded a car bomb outside Sinn Féin offices on the Falls Road in west Belfast.

Sources say the UVF now has significant quantities of explosive and has perfected its bomb-making abilities.

In November 1975 a man will be dealt with on a "fast track", with losers limited to a fixed sum in costs, still to be decided.

The society supports the move. It says potential litigants will have a much better idea of their financial risk, but warns: "Fixing the costs to be paid by the loser at too low a level could be a disaster; lawyers would have to reduce the quality of service to clients in many smaller cases and some winning litigants could be out of pocket," says the society. — Clare Dyer

News in brief

Help for 'stalking' legislation refused

THE Government yesterday rejected a plea to help introduce legislation which would make stalking a crime. The Home Secretary Michael Howard was asked to ensure that a private member's bill from Janet Anderson, the Labour MP for Rossendale & Darwen, go through unopposed in a second reading on Friday.

Home Office minister David MacLean said later that although the Government shared the concerns about stalkers, he had reservations about the bill. "I fully understand and sympathise with what Janet Anderson is trying to achieve," he said. It was feared its scope could be too wide and it could criminalise legitimate activities. "For example journalists door-stepping a politician could find themselves falling foul of the law."

PLANS by Lord Woolf to limit the legal costs losers will have to pay to winners in smaller court cases could be a disaster if the figures are set too low, the Law Society warns today. The law lord is to publish a blueprint this summer for a shake-up of civil justice to make it simpler, quicker and cheaper. Claims of up to £10,000 will be dealt with on a "fast track", with losers limited to a fixed sum in costs, still to be decided.

The society supports the move. It says potential litigants will have a much better idea of their financial risk, but warns: "Fixing the costs to be paid by the loser at too low a level could be a disaster; lawyers would have to reduce the quality of service to clients in many smaller cases and some winning litigants could be out of pocket," says the society. — Clare Dyer

Dead woman 'took pill'

DETECTIVES investigating the death of a policeman's daughter after allegedly taking ecstasy have confirmed that she was seen taking a pill in a nightclub. Claire Pierce, aged 20, daughter of Superintendent Roy Pierce of the Nottinghamshire force, was found dead on a sofa after an all-night party.

Simon Wright, 20, who was host of the party in Maden Vale, Mansfield, said he was told that Claire, who worked with her mother as a bereavement counsellor, had taken ecstasy at the Progress nightclub in Derby.

A post mortem proved inconclusive and police are awaiting a toxicology report due tomorrow.

Forecast defended

UNEXPECTED sunshine brought out the Bank holiday crowds yesterday after weathermen had forecast a chilly and cloudy conditions. They admitted the holiday was brighter than expected, but stressed that temperatures were far from summery, in Oxfordshire and the Midlands overnight temperatures dropped to -3C (27F) and other areas reported frost.

About 60,000 people turned out to watch an air show featuring Spitfires at Duxford, Cambridgeshire, clogging local roads and causing an eight-mile standstill on the M11. War hero Air Vice Marshal "Johnny" Johnson, 80, was forced to walk a mile and half to the gates of the airfield after being caught in traffic for more than three hours.

A spokesman for the London Weather Centre insisted the forecasts had not been too far off.

Two share jackpot

ONE of the two £11 million weekend National Lottery winners is a man from north-west England. The organisers said the other winner had yet to come forward. The two share a jackpot of £21,806,396. Winning numbers: 6, 25, 29, 33, 34, 47. Bonus ball, 49.

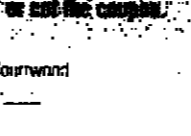


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'It is tepid dishwater soup, without character or flavour, inhabiting some cardboard world 20 years out of date, in some imaginary middle suburbia'

— Polly Toynbee (right)



'Stupidvision' swipe at BBC TV

A FORMER senior journalist at the BBC yesterday branded daytime television as "stupidvision".

Polly Toynbee, former social affairs correspondent on BBC News, said it looked cheap, lacked character and was 20 years out of date.

She launched her attack in the Radio Times and asked readers to send in suggestions for alternative daytime programmes to replace the "weary grunge of the past".

But the BBC last night pointed out that most of its daytime programmes were popular — and said it had already announced a rethink of morning shows following the scrapping of its Good Morning with Anne and Nick.

Toynbee said the rivalry between that show and This Morning with Richard and Judy on ITV was often more lively off screen than on.

She went on to attack most daytime television on BBC and ITV, saying: "Most of it looks cheap and designed for no one in particular — perhaps some computerised calculation of the lowest common denominator."

"It is tepid dishwater soup, without character or flavour, inhabiting some cardboard world 20 years out of date, in some imaginary middle suburbia."

"It is stupidvision — where most of the presenters look like they have to pretend to be stupid because they think their audience is. In other words, it patronises."

Daytime television was a professional "graveyard" with a lack of new ideas or risky formats. There were some exceptions, like Can't Cook, Won't Cook, Ready Steady Cook and the "magic insanity" of Supermarket Sweep — "a kind of shoppers on ecstasy", she said.

A BBC spokesman said: "These are Polly Toynbee's personal views — and somewhat belated given the announcement in March that a new BBC schedule is in preparation for next autumn."

"The planning process has involved extensive consultations with viewers and research into daytime audience opinions and expectations, but we are always happy to listen to fresh opinions."

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City offers 'levy' for transport

Michael White
Political Editor

THE Treasury is resisting a new scheme proposed by the City to raise the funds for much-needed public transport projects by asking larger firms to pay what amounts to voluntary taxes.

The blueprint, which is supported by the Corporation of London, would offer businesses a vote — or several votes for big firms — on whether or not to back specific transport schemes, from a local tramline to large projects such as the long-stalled CrossRail link.

If a majority of firms in the scheme agreed, even those which voted "no" would be expected to pay up over several years.

Local authorities would collect the money on top of business rates. Whitehall's hostility is partly political — fear of covert tax — and partly the result of long-standing opposition to the ring-fencing of general taxes for a defined purpose.

Despite fashionable support for the private finance initiative as a means of easing the tax burden, hardline Treasury officials may also claim that an "infrastructure levy" would count against the public sector borrowing requirement.

Its supporters brush such objections aside. The revenue generated would guarantee income which would in turn generate more funds, if techniques developed in the United States can be adapted to British needs. Enthusiasts say it need not be confined to public transport improvements, much needed in London and other cities.

Car park schemes, tree planting and even keeping streets free of vagrants are big issues in Houston, Texas, where civic traditions are weak and municipal powers slight. But Treasury ministers, jittery about any idea that smacks of extra taxes, have been cool towards the City's suggestions.

In particular, ministers fear small businesses in the suburbs which already pay substantial sums under the unified business rate, could be forced out of business by such levies. Supporters say they could be excluded from the levy and the vote.

After a version of the unified business rate "supplement" was floated by London First, the lobby group chaired by Tory businessman Lord Shepherd, the Department of Transport was cautious.

It admitted that it "could be levied on larger businesses in central and inner London... the idea is an interesting one which would have considerable attractions if it could be made to work on a genuinely voluntary basis."

But the department's transport strategy published last week stressed that London First's version was a tax and the spending which it supported would be public expenditure. It still claimed to favour the private finance initiative approach that the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, is promoting.

A recent paper for the Greater London group at the London School of Economics said that at least £700 million a year for 10 years is needed to make up for past neglect on London's Underground alone. Alternatives to a levy could include extra taxes or road pricing — from which ministers have backed down in face of the motoring lobby.



Kielder Lake in Northumbria, once seen as a 'white elephant' but now a regional life-saver expected to attract thousands to its shores for weekend festivals

PHOTOGRAPH: TOM FINNE

Festival fetes derided liquid asset

Martin Wainwright
on a dam good do

FLAGS, dancers and giant inflatable eggs are about to help celebrate a "white elephant" reservoir which has become a regional life-saver in drought-stricken Britain.

Thousands of visitors are expected along the 27-mile shoreline of Kielder Lake in Northumbria on the last two weekends of this month, to mark the "unique, ever-changing" mixture of forest and water, once condemned as environmental vandalism.

Two hundred Northumbrian pipers will open a free trail designed by disabled young people, while students and a Dutch theatre company create an "entirely other" world on Bull Crag, opposite Kielder's mile-long dam.

The festival will focus North-eastern regional pride in "Our Kielder", whose 44 billion gallon capacity remained above 80 per cent even in last year's drought. Built in the 1970s to cope with a new British Steel plant on Teesside, it flooded a wild valley and several hamlets and caused uproar.

"The water board was accused of creating a white elephant and making the largest boating lake in Europe," said Andrew Fentim of Northumbrian Water yesterday. "There were two public inquiries, and an outcry when British Steel decided to move to South Wales instead."

The shift in public opinion has been almost complete since the Queen opened it in 1982, along with water links allowing

Kielder to maintain flows in the rivers Tyne, Tees, Derwent and Wear.

Kielder has also been important in attracting new industry to the North-east, including a Siemens electronics plant on Tyneside and a Fujitsu one at Newton Aycliffe, which uses as much water every day as a town of 30,000 people.

But the festival coincides with renewed controversy over Kielder, as drought-stricken Yorkshire completes plans for an emergency tap on the huge lake, via the Tees and new £45 million pipelines. The Environment Agency this week registered concern about Kielder's colder water destroying flora and fauna in the Yorkshire rivers, and is expected to sanction the link only as a last resort.



Banks 'profit from charity'

Owen Bowcott

ACITY consortium involving six of the main clearing banks has been making excessive profits by lending cash to a government-funded charity for the disabled, according to a leaked accountant's report.

The allegation comes shortly before publication of a long-awaited National Audit Office inquiry examining the complex relationship between the charity Motability and its associated company, Motability Finance Limited, the largest car fleet operator in Britain.

Disabled clients of the charity have also been encouraged to buy unsuitable cars, for which MFL had fleet discounts, rather than cheaper and more appropriate vehicles. Channel 4's Dispatches programme claims tomorrow.

MFL, a joint venture between Barclays, NatWest, Midland, Lloyds, the Royal Bank of Scotland and the Bank of Scotland, has been at the centre of controversy throughout the last year. The problem has been exacerbated by an accounting system which channels money through several companies.

Critics of the scheme, which has leased cars to the

disabled since 1977, allege that MFL has been making undeserved profits by lending capital to Motability at above the market level of interest rates. The loans are devoid of risk, it is said, since they are backed by government-funded disability allowance payments.

An internal accountant's report, produced by the merchant bank Schroders for the governors of Motability in late 1995 and obtained by Dispatches, suggest that interest rates charged to the charity were higher than they should have been. "The current mortgages arranged in 1993 appear now to be out of line with the market," the report notes.

Instead of charging 1.25 per cent per annum they should have been charging 0.75 per cent, it suggests. Mick and Annette Reynolds, of Nottingham, claim in the programme they were told they should lease a Ford Transit van even though it did not have room for an electric wheelchair lift.

The Charity Commissioners are in correspondence with Motability over the issue but are awaiting the NAO report, due to be published next month. Motability and MFL have declined to comment on the claims until the report has been published.

Steel tubes used to correct heart malformation

Chris Mihill
Medical Correspondent

BABIES born with a life-threatening narrowing of the coronary arteries can be helped by a procedure using steel tubes to hold the blood vessels open, heart specialists report today.

Every year about 6,000 babies are born with congenital malformations of the heart and blood vessels. In about 5 per cent the defect involves a narrowing of the artery which carries blood from the heart to the lungs. The resulting obstruction can be life-threatening or severely disabling, and children with this

type of narrowing may suffer from shortage of breath.

The condition can be difficult to treat surgically, and a number of procedures have been tried, but the obstruction can recur.

James Taylor and colleagues are today to tell the annual meeting of the British Cardiac Society in Glasgow of a successful approach using stents — tubes of stainless steel — to widen and support the narrowed section of the blood vessel.

The stents are guided at the end of a catheter, with another catheter over it to prevent its getting caught during the delicate positioning procedure. Once in position the

catheters are withdrawn, leaving the stent in place.

Dr Taylor, from the Great Ormond Street hospital for children, in London, said: "We have treated 23 patients aged between seven months and 19 years, most of whom have had narrowing in one or both arteries to the lungs. In most cases we have achieved a permanent increase in the size of the vessel, a fall in blood pressure difference across the narrowed segment, and an improvement in the patient's symptoms."

"It must be made clear that this technically demanding procedure is not always successful and not without risk, but this must be put into the

context of a progressively disabling condition and the risk of a further difficult surgical operation."

Elderly people can benefit as well as younger ones from repairs to a heart valve, surgeons will tell the meeting.

Mitral valve disease is common in the elderly and is a frequent cause of disability and death. The mitral valve is situated between the two left chambers of the heart (atrium and ventricle) and controls the flow of blood between them.

If the valve becomes diseased and leaky, oxygenated blood in the left ventricle — the main pumping chamber — flows back into the left

atrium instead of being pumped out of the heart and around the body.

Most patients tolerate a moderate degree of leaking but become increasingly breathless, and heart failure develops. Diseased valves can be repaired surgically or replaced with an artificial valve.

Leonard Shapiro and colleagues in the regional cardiac unit at Papworth Hospital, Cambridge, have studied 614 patients treated for mitral valve disease.

They found that operating early in the disease, before the condition of the patient had deteriorated, was one of the most important factors in

success, regardless of the age of the patient.

Many cholesterol tests are being misdirected at people with a low risk of heart disease, while those at high risk are being missed, according to Caroline Morrison, a consultant in public health medicine with the Greater Glasgow Health Board. She looked at some 400 people who had received cholesterol tests.

About 40 per cent needed them because of heart disease or a number of risk factors — but 60 per cent of those tested were at low risk.

"We need to educate the public and produce better guidelines for doctors about who needs a test."

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Arson police talk to man

David Pallister

AMAN was being questioned by police last night about an arson attack on a Southampton council house in which four brothers and sisters aged between eight and 12 died.

Their parents, Mervyn and Beverly Good, and an older daughter, Kelly, aged 14, survived by scrambling out of a first floor window and on to a conservatory roof. Kelly was badly burned and is expected to be kept in the Odstock hospital, Salisbury, Wiltshire, for at least a week.

After forensic scientists confirmed that the blaze was deliberate, Detective Superintendent Peter Neyroud said he was trying to find out if anyone had a grudge against the family. The man "helping the police with their inquiries" was found within a few hours of the fire in the Southampton area.

The fire started early on Sunday morning. The four who died from inhalation of toxic fumes — Terry, 12, Allison, 10, Nicola, eight, and Patrick, six — were found on the floor of a back bedroom.

The police have not yet talked to the couple or Kelly in detail. "I don't want to



Local children prepare flowers to leave at the scene of the Southampton fire in which four brothers and sisters died

push a family that is so heavily traumatised into answering questions," Supt Neyroud said.

"Four children have died. Words almost fail me. It is almost impossible to think of what must have gone through the mind of someone who may have set light to a house with a family in it."

Mrs Good's father, Thomas Fryer, aged 76, who visited

the burned-out house in Sullivan Road, Sholing, said his daughter told him: "Dad, I wish none of us had woken up and we'd all died together."

Police are investigating reports of five men standing near the house shouting, "Burn, you bastards, burn" but would not confirm accounts that Kelly saw a man whom she knew pour petrol through the letter box.

Beef ban hopes recede

Stephen Bates in Brussels

THE Government's hopes of securing at least a partial lifting of the EU ban on British beef were receding last night as Douglas Hogg, the Agriculture Minister, lobbied his fellow ministers at an informal meeting in the Italian city of Otranto.

That meeting is not empowered to take decisions on lifting the ban. It comes less than seven days after the formal agriculture council in Luxembourg, when Britain was warned that further measures would be needed, and ministers are still not prepared to reach an accommodation with the British government.

Beef sales have slumped across Europe by an average of more than 30 per cent in the wake of the BSE scare, even in countries like Germany which were not importing British beef.

Agriculture ministers have warned that they want to see the effect of the British eradication measures before their ban is lifted, and some have suggested this may not be before the end of the year.

Veterinary experts from all 15 member states will be meeting in Brussels today and tomorrow, but they will not be formally discussing the beef crisis or a lifting of the embargo on byproducts.

To do so, they would require a recommendation

from the European Commission, which said yesterday it was still not in a position to back lifting the ban.

Meanwhile, the commission will today announce that it is making a grant of more than £1 million to China for genetic improvement of its water buffaloes.

The project, which will fund research into boosting the milk and meat yields of buffaloes in three provinces, to improve sources of urban food supplies, is to be announced by Sir Leon Brittan, the trade commissioner, during a visit to China.

Teresa Gorman, the Tory Euro sceptic MP, yesterday described the grant as "judicious gesture politics".

Britain close to sweet victory over chocolate

Martin Wainwright

BRTAIN is close to winning its "chocolate war" with rival states in Europe whose confectionery lobbies are battling against the likes of chocolate oranges and Kit-Kat.

A draft directive from the European Commission, released yesterday, recommends allowing local choice in the small but hotly-contested world of chocolate recipes.

Commissioners have snubbed a campaign to outlaw the small dose of vegetable oil traditional in Britain. "This is a victory for common sense," said Hugh Bayley, Labour MP for York, which houses Row-

tree Nestlé and Terry's. "It was bizarre and unacceptable that other European countries wanted to ban our traditional recipe. Europe has got to be flexible and respect the differences between member states."

The draft must still be approved by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, but both are expected to accept it.

Spin-paintings and carved-up cows, cement-cast houses, foetus earrings and giant iron angels may excite comment and derision, but they have never equalled the bricks as a symbol

Communist urges candidates to respect outcome

Yeltsin promises poll will go ahead

David Hearst in Moscow

GENNADY Zyuganov, the Russian Communist leader and main challenger to Boris Yeltsin, yesterday called on all candidates in next month's presidential election to sign a pact to abide by the outcome.

Mr Zyuganov made his call after a rocky 24 hours in Russian politics sparked by the suggestion by the president's chief bodyguard and closest political confidant, Lieutenant-General Alexander Korzhakov, that the election be postponed. Gen Korzhakov claimed the vote could lead to a civil war.

Gen Korzhakov was overruled by President Yeltsin who said yesterday the election would go ahead.

But Mr Yeltsin characteristically muddied the waters by conceding that the general was not alone in believing a Communist victory could spark turmoil.

The president's pledge was swiftly welcomed by the Clinton administration. "We've stressed the importance of the June 16 election and the certainty of the democratic process," the White House spokesman, Mike McCurry, declared. "Whether the Communists were returned to power, was a question for

the Russian people to address in a free and fair election."

Speaking in Bonn, Mr Zyuganov said: "We must guarantee the elections are carried out in a strictly democratic, honest and legal fashion, and at the same time sit around a table with all the parties and movements and sign an agreement that the outcome of the election, as expressed by voters, will be sacred."

Earlier Mr Yeltsin was anything but convincing about his pledge to respect the wisdom of Russian voters. "Korzhakov is not alone in thinking that a victory of Zyuganov would be the start of a civil war," he said.

In a separate interview with the Russian business magazine Delovye Lyudy, he likened the possibility of Mr Zyuganov taking power to the Bolshevik revolution.

"I would not say today that the process of reform has gone so far that it cannot be reversed," Mr Yeltsin warned. "I am convinced that they [the Communists] are preparing to act without any limitations, like what happened after 1917."

The Communist chairman of the lower house of parliament, Gennady Seleznyov, said there were no grounds to delay the poll and accused Mr Yeltsin of "rocking the boat".

Yladimir Lukin, a founding

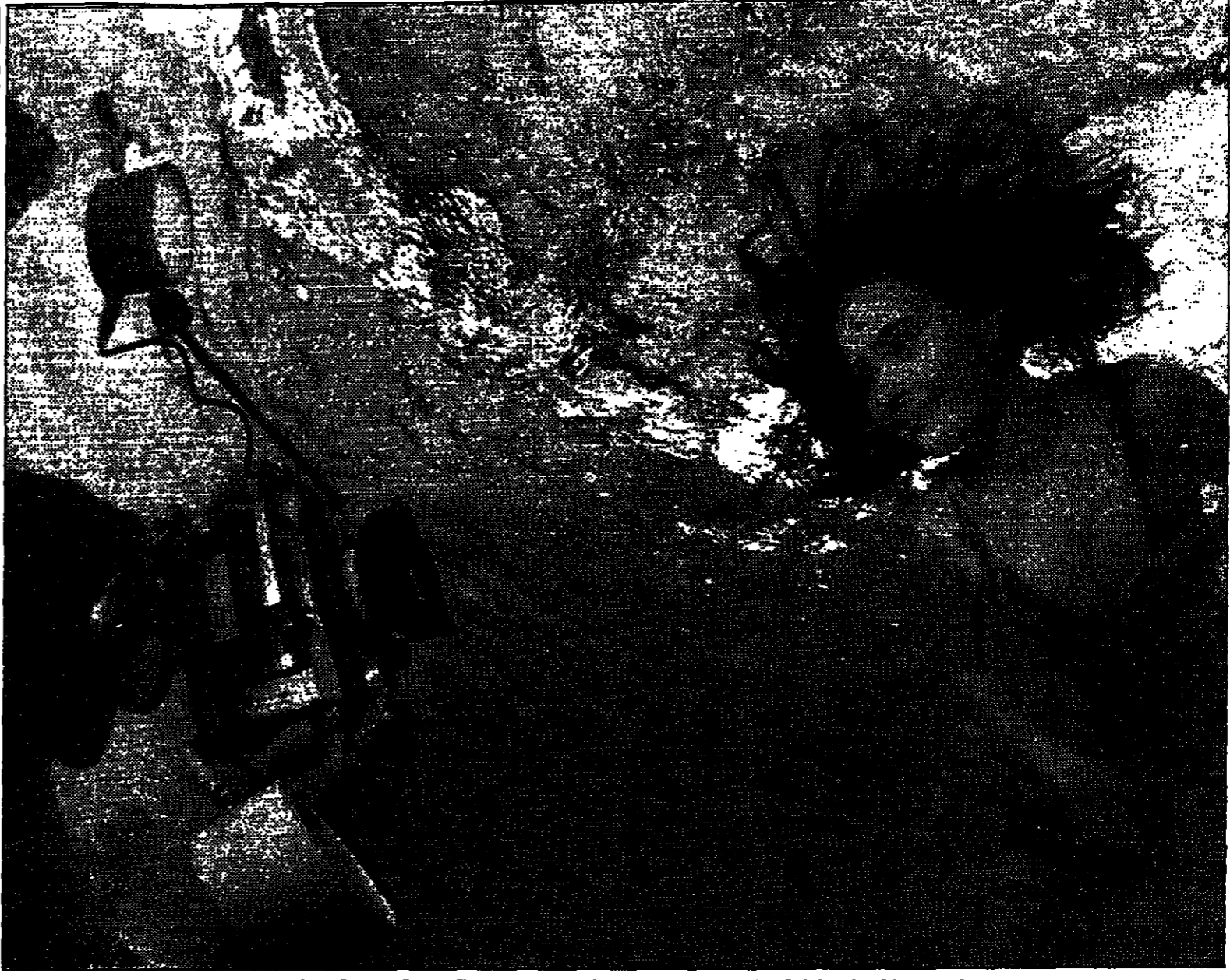
member of the Yabloko party, whose leader, Grigory Yavlinsky, is also running for president, said Gen Korzhakov's remarks "smell of intrigue". The extreme nationalist, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, said: "The authorities understand that they are losing."

Mr Yeltsin's clique of advisers has every reason to fear a change in Kremlin management, not least because they know how easily in the past he has come to pragmatic deals with his political opponents. A recent meeting with Mr Yavlinsky has sparked rumours that Mr Yeltsin offered him the post of prime minister in return for his support.

Mr Yeltsin is still trailing by six points in the opinion polls, having made up much lost ground through anti-Communism, overt election handouts to a wide variety of disgruntled voters, and efforts to make peace in Chechnya.

But his populist promise, made in Yekaterinburg a month ago, to pay of the entire backlog of unpaid wages in March, has not worked. Only 20 per cent of the arrears have been paid, and Mr Yeltsin continues to face a hostile reception from pensioners on election walkabouts in provincial cities.

Leader comment, page 8; Pass Notes, G2 page 3



Shooting pool... Young members of the former Soviet Union's only underwater photography club in Kharkiv, Ukraine PHOTOGRAPH: SERGEY DOLZHEVNIKOV

Spain 'may shut Rock frontier'

Adela Gooch in Madrid

SPAIN'S new conservative government has threatened to sever all links with Gibraltar unless smuggling from the British colony is curtailed.

"If measures adopted by the outgoing government prove insufficient we will have to increase the pressure," Abel Matutes told Spanish newspapers just hours after being named foreign minister.

"I hope it will not prove necessary to shut down all communication once again, but we are willing to take any alternative action we consider necessary. We are not ruling anything out," he said.

Spanish commentators interpreted the remarks as a return to the harsh stance adopted by General Franco, who closed the frontier from 1969 to 1982, isolating the Rock to all but air travel to Britain and ship travel. Franco mistakenly predicted that "Gibraltar would fall like an overripe plum".

The previous Socialist government opened the border and began regular talks with Britain, but the issue flared up again recently over speedboats based in the colony and used to smuggle drugs and tobacco to Spain.

Madrid retaliated with extensive border searches, which cause long queues for Gibraltarans going to and from Spain.

Mr Matutes's comments come at a particularly sensitive time — in the run-up to general election in Gibraltar next week. The incumbent chief minister, Joe Bossano, favours greater independence but eschews any links with Spain, while his main opponents consider the Rock's eco-

omic future at least lies in improved links with Madrid.

Mr Matutes also urged Nato members to reconsider the wisdom of maintaining an alliance base on the Rock, arousing an indignant reaction from Mr Bossano.

"He is working on the mistaken analysis, made in the 1980s, that Britain's interest in Gibraltar lies in its military value, rather than in its sense of responsibility to the Gibraltarans. That responsibility will not change and neither will our attitude," he said.

The dispute over Gibraltar is a serious complication for the European Union and Nato. The alliance base there is the main obstacle to Spain's full integration into Nato's military structure — a move favoured by the new prime minister, José María Aznar, and the Nato secretary-general, Javier Solana, a former Socialist foreign minister.

Mr Matutes also tackled the monetary union question head-on, calling for the timetable to be delayed so that Spain would have more chance of qualifying.

"It seems to me a reasonable idea to stop the monetary union clock so that a few more of us can jump on to the bandwagon," he said. "It seems likely that this will happen. I don't think France will want countries like Spain and Italy left out."

Although most analysts believe it would be virtually impossible for Spain to meet its convergence targets on time, Mr Aznar had until now paid lip service at least to the existing timetable.

The new economics minister, Rodrigo Rato, has used the Maastricht criteria to justify the austerity programme he plans to introduce.

Spanish village laments what the bishop said to the actress

Our correspondent in Madrid

THE PEOPLE of La Iglesia de la Virgen, a hamlet in the remote Spanish region of Teruel, had been reveling in their 15 minutes of fame. But they watched in despair yesterday as the American actress Faye Dunaway was forced by a bishop to leave.

A 35 million peseta (£175,000) contract had been negotiated for Ms Dunaway and her 70-strong crew to film in the square and at an 11th century shrine to the Virgin Mary and the warrior El Cid. The mayor, José Miguel Cruz, backed the project, hoping it would put La Iglesia de la Virgen, an ailing agricultural community, on the tourist map.

But the local bishop, Antonio Alorga, reacted angrily when his permission was asked to film the shrine, declaring: "The subject matter — the sexual relations of a young man with an older woman in the context of blackmail, adultery, and prostitution — must not be associated with the Virgin."

The director, Antonio Lombardo, described the film — *In the Arms of an Older Woman* — as a poignant encounter between two people during the Spanish civil war and urged Bishop Alorga to read the script.

National media focused on the row as villagers pleaded for a change of heart. But the bishop was adamant and Ms Dunaway and the crew moved on.

"It was a unique opportunity and we've lost it," lamented a villager.

Bossi puts the boot in Italian nation state

A speech demanding self-determination for the north has alarmed the rest of the country. John Hooper in Rome reports

IN TYPICALLY flamboyant yet subtly equivocal fashion, Umberto Bossi, the leader of the Northern League, has put the future of Italy's rich north back at the top of the political agenda two weeks after a general election threatened to sideline his movement.

Politicians of the left and right have expressed outrage about a speech by Mr Bossi at the weekend urging a peaceful, Czechoslovak-style breakup of Italy. "The time has come to sit down around a table to divide up the country," he declared.

Mr Bossi was addressing the self-styled Mantua parliament, a convention of the League's representatives to the Rome legislature which has taken on many of the airs of a constituent assembly since its formation last year. On Saturday, the "parliament" approved a motion which is thought to have endorsed the "right to self-determination of the people of Padania [Mr Bossi's name for the north]" and their "right of resistance" to laws or rules which stand in the way of their advancement.

The amended text is due to be released today, but a draft version put out yesterday by the Italian news agency Adnkronos said it had been "only slightly modified before approval".

The resolution also approved the creation of an umbrella group, the Padania Liberation Committee, and opened the way for the election of a 10-strong "government" by the next session of the parliament.

Italy's probable new prime minister, Romano Prodi, said Mr Bossi's remarks were "terrible". The Pope, on a pasto-

ral visit to the north, begged Roman Catholics to work for the "common good of the entire national community".

Mr Bossi backtracked a little yesterday, insisting his views were not yet League policy. Commentators speculated that his real aim was a federal arrangement negotiated with the central government.

The League, standing alone under a mainly first-past-the-post system that favours broad alliances, did unexpectedly well at last month's general election. It will provide almost one in 10 of Italy's new legislators, but will not hold the balance of power, as it did before the poll.

The separatist issue has given the League a higher profile than it would otherwise have had.

"The people who vote for the League are not voting for a separate Padania. They are voting against what Bossi calls the Roman robbers, and to a slightly lesser extent they are voting against the south and against immigrants," said Patrick McCarthy, professor of European studies at

the Johns Hopkins Centre in Bologna and author of a book called *The Crisis of the Italian State*. "The reform movement in Italy has been going since 1992, but it still hasn't succeeded in satisfying those in the richest parts of the country."

Polls suggest that most northern Italians regard the idea of an independent state as unrealistic, though more than half view it as potentially advantageous.

Fears have been expressed that Mr Bossi may be unable to control. Last weekend's parliament was the first to be guarded by a new body, the League's Green Shirts.

For the moment, they are a 40-strong internal security force. But what they are intended to become is not clear.

One League deputy said their uniform symbolised the movement's attachment to "the fields and fresh grass of our plains". He foresaw them "protecting the forests which are under so much threat".

Another said they represented the nucleus of a National Guard of the North, or GNN.

"The state has its carabinieri, the police, the revenue guard, the forestry guards. And we have the GNN, volunteers for the freedom of the north. We shall set out a big book, and anyone who wants to join up can — men, women and children."



Umberto Bossi: 'It is time to divide up the country'

Albania's 'avowed virgins' wear the trousers

Steve Pagan in Bajza

DEEP in the barren mountains of northern Albania, a group of women clings to a tradition as old as the blood feuds that have returned to the region.

Poverty, war and vendettas which wiped out the male line of a family meant women, and sometimes girls, would take control of the household.

Many believed the custom had died out with the feudal system that communist leaders tried to eradicate.

But the women live on. Known as "avowed virgins", they obey an unwritten rule which requires them never to marry or have children.

When a girl adopts the mantle of "paterfamilias", she cuts her hair short, dresses as a boy and takes on a man's job.

The men and village elders accord the "virgins" all the rights and privileges of fellow males. They negotiate deals on the family's behalf and are consulted on village affairs.

Lula Ivanaj is one such woman. At the age of 15, she accepted her widowed mother's request that she head the family of 10 daughters and one son. The boy was considered too weak for the job.

"I am never regarded as a woman but as a man," said Lula, aged 41, as she sat chain-smoking in her elder sister's one-room home in the rural town of Bajza, 90 miles north of Tirana.

"Usually if the men have been killed either through war or blood feuds, then a woman has the power to take over the defence of the family. But it was more often because of blood feuds," she said.

Lula's sister Marije and other female family members wear long dark dresses, and black scarves or white headwraps. Lula has cropped hair and wears a sweatshirt and trousers.

"I've never worn a dress or scarf. At weddings and on special occasions, I put on a suit, shirt and tie," she said.

After years in male company, Lula sits and gesticulates like a man.

She was originally known as Lula but changed her name to the more masculine form, Lula. She has spent most of

her working life driving a tractor, and is now an experienced welder.

The tradition of "avowed virgins" is believed to have originated in a remote community called Kelmendi, the birthplace of the 17th century "warrior virgin" Nora.

According to legend, Nora stabbed to death a conquering Ottoman pasha who wanted to marry her. She fled into the hills and led resistance against the Turks. She was eventually caught, but the Turks accorded her the "privilege" of being executed as a man. — Reuter.



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Zaire's miracle man runs out of luck

FOR Israel Ciswaka, his pastor's arrest, torture and dispatch to a Zairean military prison for 12 months that there is a God after all.

"He warned us in a sermon that God had told him the army was coming for him, and one hour later what he preached happened. We are trying to see that the word of God came true," Mr Ciswaka said.

Others consider it less than a miracle that Fernando Kuthino, pastor of the Army of Victory church, was jailed by a military tribunal last month for allegedly stockpiling weapons. Rev Kuthino was becoming an increasingly powerful and controversial voice in the competitive world of Zairean religion.

Evangelical churches have flourished since Zaire began its laboured transition to democracy in 1990. Crowds are drawn to ministries popping up in garages and abandoned stores as much by the daily grind of poverty as by greater religious freedom. And some pastors are discovering that religion is a good way to make money.

"The model is America. The United States evangelist Jimmy Swaggart, disgraced on home turf after being caught with a prostitute, frequently graces Zairean television screens. Pat Robertson, an American who blends fiery preaching and right-wing politics, pays regular visits to Zaire.

Rev Robertson has proven himself a loyal ally of President Mobutu Sésé Séko in the

US, in return for a free hand to pursue business interests in Zaire, including diamond mining.

Most of the new churches are Protestant, encouraged by President Mobutu to counter Roman Catholic criticism of his reign. Moonies and Jehovah's Witnesses have found growing audiences, while Baptists and Pentecostals have recently latched on to the pygmy population as a source of recruits.

Even one of President Mobutu's most prominent cohorts has taken to evangelism with a passion. Honore Ngbanda is popularly known as "The Terminator" because of those said to have died at the hands of the intelligence service he once led. Today he runs a Christian cafe. Brothers on being called

Pastor Fernando Kuthino promised everything from a place in heaven to a cure for Aids, but he was no match for President Mobutu, writes Chris McGreal in Kinshasa



Ngbanda, and regularly appears on television to preach the virtues of strict adherence to biblical teachings.

Rev Kuthino is one of Zaire's best known preachers. He appeared on television

each Sunday and launched his own radio station. A photograph on a wall of his Miracle Centre offers a clue to his style. Fitted out in a white stetson, aviator sunglasses and faded denim jacket with

his thumbs stuck in his belt, Rev Kuthino looks more like a country music singer than a pastor. But to the envy of his competitors, he proved adept at fund-raising from foreign churches.

Rev Kuthino's followers believe that his influence — and his message — was his downfall. After a stint with Rev Robertson's Assemblies of God ministry in Virginia, he returned to Zaire six years ago and launched the Army of Victory. It promised everything from a place in heaven to a cure for Aids.

Its Miracle Centre is packed for services, with throbbing Zairean music carrying way beyond its walls. Nailed up behind Rev Kuthino's pulpit are the discarded crutches of those said to have benefited.

"People come here to get

healed from Aids and any kind of illness, or just to escape life outside these walls. We give them hope," said Egidio Bomper, one of the ministry's officials.

Old-style evangelists, such as Jacques Vernand, dismiss the likes of Rev Kuthino as akin to devil-worshippers.

"These people are dangerous because Zaireans swallow anything — any new teaching, any new doctrine or sect. These preachers are blending fetish worship with Christianity," he said.

But the Army of Victory challenges the traditional religious view that the downtrodden should accept their lot in this life, in expectation of relief in the next.

"The difference is we talk about victory in this life," Mr Bomper said. "We say people

do not have to accept hardship, that they do not just have to suffer, that they can fight back against those who make their lives miserable."

Rev Kuthino's supporters said he had been warned off sermons encouraging the poor to challenge exploitation and oppression. A banner hangs across the Miracle Centre, reading: "We use all ways and means possible." But the ministry insists Rev Kuthino encouraged only non-violent resistance.

In February, just before his radio station was to go on air, soldiers burst into the Miracle Centre, claiming to have discovered a weapons cache, and took Rev Kuthino away.

"I never saw any weapons here. They didn't like his popularity and what he had to say," Mr Bomper said.

S Africa races to beat constitution clock

David Beresford in Johannesburg

SOUTH AFRICA has 24 hours to avoid a divisive referendum on its new constitution after the main political parties failed last night to break a deadlock over the bitterly contested schools-language issue.

But Nelson Mandela succeeded in defusing another threatened crisis by persuading Chief Mangosuthu Buthe to accept a month's postponement of local government elections in KwaZulu-Natal.

The Inkatha leader had threatened to withdraw from the government of national unity if the elections, scheduled for May 29, were stalled.

But after a meeting of cabinet and party leaders lasting five and a half hours it was announced last night that unanimous agreement had been reached on the delay. The elections are now expected at the end of June.

Inkatha had claimed the African National Congress wanted to postpone the vote because it feared defeat. The ANC in the province, which has been issuing heated denunciations of Inkatha over

the last few days, insists that a fair poll cannot be amid widespread political violence.

On the constitutional front the National Party leader, F. W. de Klerk, emerged from an emergency meeting of his party's federal executive earlier in the day to announce that efforts were being made to find a fresh compromise on the education clause — which is central to the constitutional deadlock — as well as on property and employers' lock-out rights.

Talks are still continuing in an effort to see whether remaining differences can be breached," the deputy president said. The executive and party parliamentary caucus is expected to debate the issue further today.

The constitutional assembly, comprising the two houses of parliament, began debating the constitution yesterday afternoon. The final vote is expected to be taken at midday tomorrow.

The ANC raised temperatures over the language issue by accusing the Nationalists of seeking to return to "apartheid education" and "white Afrikaner privileges".

The National Party is demanding constitutional guarantees that Afrikaner chil-

ren will have the right to be taught in Afrikaans. The ANC is insisting that the maintenance or creation of single-medium schools should be an administrative decision subject to practicality.

There is some scepticism as to whether the Nationalists are prepared to pursue the issue to a referendum. The timetable in the present interim constitution obliges the constitutional assembly to approve the draft legislation by a two-thirds majority tomorrow. If it fails to do so, the country could be forced into a referendum.

The danger for the National Party is that the draft put to the vote at a referendum only has to be approved by a simple majority in the constitutional assembly — which the ANC commands. This would give the ANC the option of dumping the version already thrashed out in multi-party talks and presenting to the electorate a hardline draft shorn of compromises on such issues as property rights. A 60 per cent majority is required for the adoption of the constitution at a referendum, which the ANC is likely to achieve.

Biko family asks court not to grant amnesties

FAMILIES of three killed anti-apartheid activists asked a court yesterday to stop South Africa's "truth commission" from granting amnesty to anyone involved in human rights violations during white minority rule.

The families of Steve Biko, the black consciousness leader, Griffiths Mxenge, a lawyer, and Dr Fabian Ribeiro brought the action in

the Cape Town Supreme Court, saying the amnesties would prejudice their rights to seek civil redress.

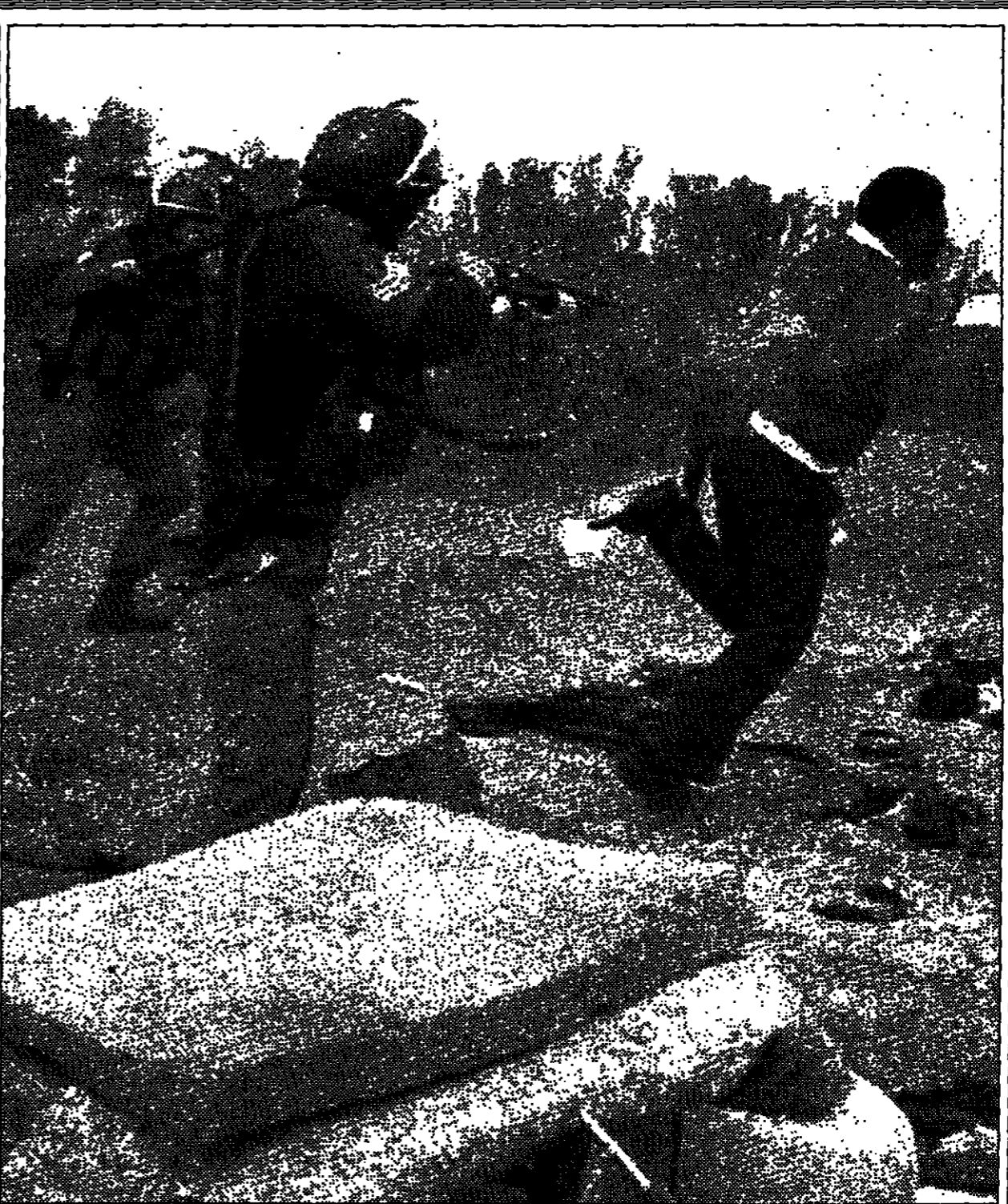
An opposing affidavit by a member of the amnesty committee of Archbishop Desmond Tutu's Truth and Reconciliation Commission denied that blanket indemnities were given.

The amnesty committee started processing applica-

tions for amnesty 10 days ago, but has not yet granted any.

The truth commission aims to heal the wounds of apartheid by confession, reconciliation and forgiveness in the form of amnesty but the three families say this lets perpetrators off too lightly.

The three were killed by security forces of the white regime that ended with free elections in 1994. — Reuter.



Squatters under siege... Police fire rubber bullets at a squatter in Alexandra township near Johannesburg yesterday. Squatters had refused to move to another site from an area earmarked for development. PHOTOGRAPH BY NICKY DE BLOS

Police hunting girls' remains investigate cellar tip-off

David Beresford in Johannesburg

AMURDER mystery which has haunted South Africa for more than six years took a new twist yesterday when police carried out secret operations at a house in Pretoria but failed to find the bodies of five missing girls.

Police were hunting for the supposed victims of a paedophile, Gert van Rooyen, in an inquiry which has similarities to the case of Britain's Fred and Rosemary West.

Mr Van Rooyen and his lover, Joey Haarhof, killed themselves in a suicide pact when a girl escaped from their home after being kidnapped and sexually molested. It was established that five other girls, aged between 11 and 13, had been at the house. A country-wide search failed to find them.

Mr Van Rooyen, like Fred West, had a penchant for building extensions to his home. Police excavations at the house in 1990 failed to find any bodies.

A tip-off that there was a hidden cellar prompted the new search with scanning equipment and hydraulic drills. Police said a dog found two girls' hair bands but by last night no other clues had been discovered.

A year after Mr Van Rooyen's death, his son, Phillipus, was sentenced to death for the murder of a young girl. The sentence was commuted to 25 years' imprisonment after an appeal.

Mr Van Rooyen's daughter faces charges relating to claims that she was the subject of an attack in a lift by two satanists who slashed her with a scalpel. She is accused of making up the story, which received wide publicity.

Peres digs in despite video

Derek Brown in Jerusalem

THE Israeli prime minister, Shimon Peres, dismissed renewed claims yesterday that Israeli gunners fired deliberately at a United Nations base in Lebanon packed with refugees.

The new accusations are backed by an amateur UN video of an Israeli unmanned spy plane flying near the Qana camp in South Lebanon as it was being pounded by artillery on April 18.

Mr Peres yesterday stuck by the Israeli army's version of events: a spy plane was flying in the vicinity but was not over the camp. "The army was very careful with its story and the army submitted when it made a mistake. We made a mistake. We are terribly sorry... But we insist the information that was given is correct," he said.

More than 100 Lebanese civilians died in the attack on Qana, and the much vaunted Israeli capacity for precision strikes was gravely undermined by the hideous carnage at the UN camp, in which the presence of refugees was public knowledge.

The confirmation that a pilotless "drone" was operating in the area of the camp at the time is further ammunition for critics, who say the firing was at best cynically callous, and at worst deliberate.

Israel says the shells which hit Qana were fired in response to a Hizbullah rocket and mortar attack. That the shells hit a UN post, said one senior officer in the after-

math of the massacre, was "a regrettable miss and not bad decision-making".

The army initially denied that it had had a drone in the area, and came out with contradictory comments as to whether they knew of the civilian presence at Qana.

A week after the attack, the deputy army chief, Major General Matan Vilnai, said the artillery had not known how many people were in the UN base. "At the time of the shelling we had no drone in the area because the weather conditions made it impossible," he said.

On April 23, the army chief of staff, Lieutenant General Amnon Shahak, said: "We did not know that there were civilians there, but we knew that this was a UN position."

Three days later, the head of military intelligence, Major General Moshe Ya'alon, said that the presence of refugees was known — but not to the artillery command. On Sunday, Maj Gen Vilnai said that inaccurate military maps had caused the "mistake" at Qana.

● Palestinian and Israeli negotiators yesterday ended their first, largely symbolic, talks on a permanent peace settlement, at the Egyptian resort of Taba. The talks will resume after the Israeli general election on May 29.

Meanwhile Israeli soldiers shot and wounded nine Palestinians yesterday in clashes with demonstrators protesting against Israeli land confiscations at the self-ruled enclave of Qalqilya in the West Bank, hospital officials said.

News in brief

Body of former CIA director Colby found
 THE body of the former CIA chief, William Colby, aged 76, was washed ashore yesterday on a riverbank south of Washington, nine days after neighbours first reported him missing, writes Martin Walker in Washington.
 Police said they saw no reason to suspect foul play, although only an autopsy could decide cause of death. The body was identified by his wife, Sally Shelton Colby, who had maintained all last week that, as a survivor of the second world war and Vietnam, her husband would still be alive.
 Colby challenged the CIA's code of silence by revealing its secrets to congressional in-

Ortega chosen as candidate
 The leftwing Sandinista National Liberation Front overwhelmingly picked the former president, Daniel Ortega, as its presidential candidate for Nicaragua's general elections on October 20.
 Mr Ortega received 471 votes from an electorate of 640 on Sunday. — AP.

Tax incentive
 The French president, Jacques Chirac, admitted yesterday that many people were disappointed by the slow pace of reforms in his first year but raised the prospect of tax cuts in 1997 as an incentive for further spending cuts. — Reuter.

US firm on Iraq
 The US ambassador, Madeline Albright, has defended her country's tough stance on oil-for-food talks between the United Nations and Iraq, saying: "We know Saddam Hussein is very clever in manipulating aspects of this policy and we want to make sure... the fact and medicine get to the people of Iraq." — Reuter.

Truce ignored
 Young street fighters renewed territorial battles in the capi-

Caffeine hit
 Americans needing to stay awake but unable to face coffee or Coke have found a compromise — bottled mineral water laced with caffeine, writes Jonathan Freedland in Washington. Water Joe has become a hit among students, lorry-drivers, and hard-pressed businessmen.

Chrétien charged
 The Canadian prime minister, Jean Chrétien, who grabbed a protester by the jaw during a public event in February, was yesterday charged with assault, the Canadian Press agency reported. A judge ordered him to appear in court on June 6. — Reuter.

Turks cut back
 The Turkish prime minister, Mesut Yilmaz, yesterday announced plans which could raise the retirement age and increase indirect taxation in an effort to reduce annual inflation from 80 per cent and a projected budget deficit of nearly \$8 billion, Chris Nuttall in Ankara reports.

Food of love stamped out

AS you and your loved one glide down the peaceful canals of Venice, your thoughts may turn to social security contributions, writes John Hooper in Rome.

Unromantic maybe, but as of this week a fair number of tourists who would like to be serenaded in a gondola might find themselves pondering Italy's welfare bureaucracy.

Nobody, it seems, has been paying the equivalent of National Insurance for the entertainers who play for gondola passengers.

The gondoliers, fearful that they might be liable, decided at the weekend to stop serenading till further notice.

A spokeswoman for the entertainers said that without the stamps the 120 or so freelance serenaders would not qualify for pensions.

It is not clear who is responsible for the payments, gondoliers or travel agents. But a spokesman for the gondoliers said until a solution is found, the serenades are suspended.

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Spies and the ballot box

Yeltsin wants a polls boost not a new Cold War

SPY CLAIMS and speculation that the Russian presidential election may be postponed have dramatically revived the dark art of Kremlinology this weekend. In both areas it is not so much what is said but how it is said which requires extensive analysis. The case of the alleged British spies has been denied by the Foreign Office. They are absolutely right, of course. Everyone knows that British diplomats keep their eyes open, the American ones gather intelligence, and it is only the Russians who actually spy. In real life it would be amazing if no one in the British embassy in Moscow were working for MI6 (the only question is how many). With the election in a month's time, inside political information gained by snooping of one kind or another will be more than usually prized. Nor should it be forgotten that both Russia and Britain have a vested interest in keeping a close watch on each other as competitive members of the nuclear club. The question remains why the publicity head of the successor to the KGB should have announced Moscow's "stern protest" at the use of the British embassy for "illegal spying activities". Could this by any chance be intended to pick up the patriotic vote for Boris Yeltsin?

Until Mr Yeltsin spoke out yesterday, repudiating the remarks of his security chief Alexander Korzhakov, there were some doubts as to whether voting would take place at all on June 16. Mr Korzhakov, who had said that bloodshed might follow unless the elections were postponed, is no loose cannon. His views have prevailed in the past on the president over such critical issues as oil export policy and the war in Chechnya. The notion of delaying the election has already been floated by lower-ranking officials, and Russian millionaire bankers and industrialists have also called for "compromise" between Mr Yeltsin and his communist

rival Gennady Zyuganov. Mr Korzhakov also followed up deliberately his first warning (given to *The Observer*) with a second statement in an interview with a Russian news agency on Sunday. Was Mr Yeltsin really unaware of his aide's intention? Yesterday the president said he had told Mr Korzhakov not to "get involved with politics". It is hardly surprising that some analysts will suspect there is more to the story especially since Mr Yeltsin says he shares the view that a victory for Mr Zyuganov "would start a civil war". It may suit his purpose to have Mr Korzhakov raise the political temperature and then present himself as insisting on the democratic process — so long as people vote the right way.

Mr Yeltsin is doing slightly better in the polls. Those published at the weekend showed him running neck-and-neck with Mr Zyuganov or slightly ahead. A month ago he was trailing by at least six points. However Russian commentators warn that voters have managed to disprove the polls already — particularly in the 1993 parliamentary election when the extreme nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy did far better than expected. This time too voters may be reluctant to reveal their intention to vote for an outspoken opposition candidate. There are also suspicions that the system of counting the votes, which is dominated by the president's people, may prove shaky. Many Russians believe that there has been falsification before. However the figures work out this time in the first round, no one expects Mr Yeltsin to win outright. The second round — a run-off presumably with Mr Zyuganov — is seen as much more vulnerable. Yesterday's statement will not quell the speculation: meanwhile the Russian people await more important answers — about jobs, prices and the crisis of production — which Mr Yeltsin cannot deliver.

Were they just obeying orders?

A new international court must be seen to be independent

TODAY Dusko Tadic takes his place in history. He is the first individual since Nuremberg fifty years ago to stand trial in an international court on charges of crimes against humanity. Tadic, the "butcher of Prijedor", is charged with systematic brutality against Muslim civilians, including murder, rape, and torture. He is among more than 50 individuals indicted by the international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Others include Bosnian Croats and Muslims, as well as Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb leader, and General Ratko Mladic, his military commander, who are indicted on 16 counts, including genocide.

Before the international community congratulates itself on this initiative, potentially of huge significance, we should consider the legacy of Nuremberg. Lord Shawcross, Britain's chief prosecutor, hailed the Nuremberg trial as a "milestone in the history of civilisation". It established the principle of individual responsibility for state crimes, that it was not enough to say "we were just obeying orders". Yet, as Richard Goldstone, the South African judge and chief prosecutor at the Hague tribunals for both Yugoslavia and Rwanda, has said: "The hope of 'never again' became the reality of again and again". Atrocities indicted as crimes at Nuremberg have gone unpunished, in Algeria, Cambodia, Vietnam, east Timor, Iraq, and elsewhere. The permanent members of the Security Council have supplied arms to governments

knowing they would be used, not only in war but also against ethnic minorities. So why did the Security Council agree to act on the former Yugoslavia? The short answer is embarrassment tinged, perhaps, with guilt. Here, in Europe, was ethnic cleansing, photographs of concentration camps reminiscent of the Holocaust, harrowing accounts of massacres, torture, and rape. Non-government organisations and public opinion demanded action.

The very title of the Nuremberg trial, "German Major War Criminals", gave away its limitations. Goldstone describes his strategy as investigating "lower-level persons involved in carrying out the crimes to build cases against the leaders". Time will tell if the tribunal will succeed, whether diplomatic and economic pressure will lead to the handing over of Karadzic and Mladic. The tribunal has no police force and relies on international arrest warrants.

It is an ad hoc tribunal, set up by the Security Council. Defence lawyers are already arguing that it will hand down "victors' justice", ignoring the "dirty hands" of their prosecutors. In talks at the UN about the setting up of a permanent international criminal court, the US, Britain, and France, are laying themselves open to the charge that they intend to pick and choose which case the court should take up. The court, they insist, must be a creature of the Security Council. To be credible and effective, a permanent court must be self-standing and independent.

Small wordquake in headline

Earth-shattering tale of pre-war hacks may be apocryphal

SMALL EARTHQUAKE in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire: no reports of damage. Every journalist will have felt a warm glow at reading this yesterday. New technology and casualisation may have transformed the profession, but the most famous headline remains in business, with slight variations where required. "Small earthquake in Chile: not many dead" was the winner among Times sub-editors competing long ago to write the most boring headline. It still is (the most boring).

One benefit of new technology is the speed with which a quick electronic trawl establishes how many Small Earthquakes are reported. There have been 35 since 1990. Small shocks in areas prone to larger earthquakes — California and Japan — are clearly worth reporting. So are those in South African mines which sadly cause death at regular intervals. The rest are the loose change of world wire services.

Some are reported because of their incongruity as when two small earthquakes "shook pictures off walls in Norway". In Abate, Alabama, the 1993 blizzard was followed by an earthquake which knocked some dishes off the shelf. "This has been a hell of a year", said Abate's police chief. The Small Earthquake in Jericho had to be reported, so we knew the walls had not fallen. There is a resonance to the story that the Earth Trembles in the Pyrenees. But why are there so many Small Earthquakes in Southern Bulgaria?

In July 1990, we find the memorable headline in its right location: "Small Quake in Central Chile". There were "no casualties or significant damage." Yet the real shock appeared not long ago in one of this newspaper's own columns: the famous pre-war Times headline, which Claud Cockburn claimed to have invented, may never have appeared in print.



Letters to the Editor

Of politics and punters

CHRIS POND of the Low Pay Unit (left wins battle on spending, May 6) is correct to draw attention to the threat of benefit being disallowed to a claimant whose "behaviour or appearance" has reduced their chances of landing a job. One of the more bizarre aspects of this was explained to me by a local civil servant trade unionist. As a long-haired bearded, yet employed civil servant, he could be in the position of attempting to sell a long-haired, bearded, unemployed person that his appearance reduced his chance of finding a job. Keith Sinclair, 27 Strathmore Avenue, Hull HU6 7HJ.

I WAS in the visitor's gallery at the Socialist Labour Party conference described by Matthew Engel's socialist party and I'll try if I want to. (May 6). He missed the point when he said the SLP could be as popular as the Labour Party if it were less socialist and more humorous. I am a trade unionist. It is possible I may have to go on strike. I am interested in a party that might support me if I do. The SLP might do that. That nice Mr Blair would not. Steve Kaczynski, BBC Monitoring, Caversham Park, Reading RG4 8TZ.

UNPLUGGED (Media Guardian, May 6) suggests licentiousness in The Stage's advertising: "Required for Italy: Striptease/Consummation". Consummation in this context refers to encouraging customers to buy drinks after the show. A strip joint's real profit lies in the huge mark-up on drinks, part of a "dancer's" job is to see to it that the punters consume. Any showgirl knows the trick of attaching a plastic bag to the inside of her handbag, surreptitiously filling same with drink after drink as the customer gets steadily soaked. Once the punter's been cleaned out, his hostess will disappear into the night like Cinderella, leaving only the bill as a memento of her charms. Fiona O'Connor, 11 Mobery Court, Studley Road, London SW4 6RS.

MICHAEL Newland writes (Letters, May 4): "Both bishops are generally well aware of the nature of Searchlight magazine." Yes they know Searchlight to be a respected monthly international anti-fascist and anti-racist magazine which, since the 1980s, has investigated, exposed and helped bring to book violent racists and fascists. As for the nature of Mr Newland: until a few weeks ago he was the press officer of the notorious British National Party. Enough said. Editor, Searchlight magazine, 37B New Cavendish Street, London W1M 8JR.

YOUR anniversary supplement (May 4) omits one milestone: the general newspaper strike of the late fifties. The only national on the newsstands were the then Daily Worker and, because of being printed in Manchester, the then Manchester Guardian. Up to then I had followed my parents by reading the Daily Telegraph. During the strike, I turned to the Guardian and have never looked back. James Brown, 155 Fawe Park Road, London SW15 2EG.

CONGRATULATIONS on your 175th birthday. Please keep a light shining in the darkness for many years to come. Andrew Cornell, 45 Frensham Avenue, Morley, Leeds LS27 0RP.

A child's view of justice

JUSTICE is portrayed as a woman holding evenly balanced scales. It might be more accurate as Janus, the two-faced. Here are a couple of examples. Last week the Court of Appeal ordered that Sifiso Mabhangu should be returned to his mother (Zulu boy forced to leave 'white mum', May 6). It was not the child's wish, but perhaps the court wanted to be fair to the mother (although she had consented to his departure). The fact that he might have bonded with his carer after five years of separation was apparently of no consequence. This is precisely opposite to the line taken by judges towards the parents of two children from Brighton some months ago (Jailed mother wins appeal over kidnap, August 23, 1995).

The children had been placed voluntarily in the care of East Sussex Social Services Department because of their mother's illness. Its delay in returning them after her recovery deserved criticism and caused great frustration to the couple (the words of two judges, in court). But a family court decided that because of the delay, the children had bonded so closely with their foster-parents that it would be wrong to return them. Unable to get their children back, the parents "snatched" them and were given prison sentences (that of the mother was quashed on appeal; the husband was released last month). And yet there has never been any criticism for the way the parents cared for their children: no reason to suppose that in relation to parenting skills or ability or material resources the father and mother are in any way unsuitable. Ken Norman, The Croft, Bowness-on-Solway, Carlisle CA5 5AG.

BY SOME irony of timing, on the same day that the appeal judges rejected Michael Howard's dictatorial overruling of the judgment and sentencing in the Bulger case (Howard to fight Bulger case ruling, May 3), a BBC2 programme detailed the career of Albert Speer and his trial at Nuremberg. These trials, while revealing the enormity of the Nazi war

crimes, left one puzzled as to the arbitrariness of the sentences. Some of the convicted were hanged; others, like Speer, imprisoned for decades.

What price retribution? Fifty years on, what evidence is there that such punishments have made a jot of difference to the way the "civilised" world has conducted its political affairs? Consider Korea, Vietnam, the Indian, African and Russian continents, the Middle East, and in the dead centre of Europe, mass slaughter of ethnic tribes.

In the Bulger case we have one horrific murder of a child committed by two 10-year-old boys. Why, we all ask? Is it not better for society as a whole that, during their confinement, we try to find the answer? For Howard to pursue his own sentence of vengeance is but to add a burden that will make recovery even more difficult. Returning them to society will be hard enough. Peter Porteous, Sunnybank, School Lane, Nuthourne, Chichester, W Sussex PO18 8RZ.

Europhobes and fans

DO Nicholas Budgen and this ilk ever consider the practical political consequences of their increasingly xenophobic utterances (Pride of place, May 3)?

Many of those closely involved in the 1975 European referendum came away convinced that the Yes vote won mainly because of the force of the National Front. Imagine what a new referendum campaign would involve? Messrs Portillo, Redwood and even nice Mr Budgen supported and even body-guarded (even if not wanted) by the blackshirts. Do the Europhobes really want to let this ugly genie out of the bottle? Barry Wilson, 13 Hertford Street, Cambridge CB4 3AE.

WHAT is so striking in the degree of pessimism with which we perceive Britain's place in the world: Britannia at home, Cassandra abroad. The British government derives its national, European and international power from being part of these broader communities and respecting its obligations and responsibilities therein.

Ill thought out

SABEL HILTON (Failures that led to the death of a family, May 1) is rightly concerned about the civil liberties implications of using criminal law to incarcerate people who have not committed an offence, even when violent fantasies point to criminal propensities. She seems to harbour no such qualms, however, where psychiatrists are concerned, questioning the failure of many members of the profession to intervene in such cases.

The editorial in the same issue berates the psychiatric profession for not "getting it act together" and rails against discharging people with personality disorder (ie who engage in persistent antisocial behaviour) from hospital. Psychiatrists are doctors who specialise in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness, aiming to minimise any danger resulting from the latter. The proposal that psychiatrists should control the behaviour of persons who are not ill is a curiously illiberal position for the Guardian. (Dr) Charles Sibisi, Busheyfields Hospital, Russell Hall, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 2LZ.

To ensure the efficient working of the community, it is often necessary to compromise and follow the decisions of the majority, even if we should be in the minority. This is called democracy. Having experienced democracy, we know that "unconditional surrender" is not a feature of it. We are not powerless. But we run the risk of losing them should we ignore our responsibilities towards our companions. This is neither surrender nor isolationism. It is social communitarianism, and we all do it. It's not so scary. Paul Douglas, 2 Bd Armand Duportal, 31070 Toulouse, France.

THE DSS office where I work last week received a verbal message from the Secretary of State's office instructing that under no circumstances was the European flag to be flown from our office next Thursday, Europe Day. A further instruction was that the message was not to be written down. This caused a certain amount of hilarity, not least because we do not possess a European flag in the first place. Name and address supplied.

Concrete plan watered down

SO Severn Trent water authority wants people to conserve water. It might be more accurate as Janus, the two-faced. Here are a couple of examples. Last week the Court of Appeal ordered that Sifiso Mabhangu should be returned to his mother (Zulu boy forced to leave 'white mum', May 6). It was not the child's wish, but perhaps the court wanted to be fair to the mother (although she had consented to his departure). The fact that he might have bonded with his carer after five years of separation was apparently of no consequence. This is precisely opposite to the line taken by judges towards the parents of two children from Brighton some months ago (Jailed mother wins appeal over kidnap, August 23, 1995).

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crimes, left one puzzled as to the arbitrariness of the sentences. Some of the convicted were hanged; others, like Speer, imprisoned for decades. What price retribution? Fifty years on, what evidence is there that such punishments have made a jot of difference to the way the "civilised" world has conducted its political affairs? Consider Korea, Vietnam, the Indian, African and Russian continents, the Middle East, and in the dead centre of Europe, mass slaughter of ethnic tribes. In the Bulger case we have one horrific murder of a child committed by two 10-year-old boys. Why, we all ask? Is it not better for society as a whole that, during their confinement, we try to find the answer? For Howard to pursue his own sentence of vengeance is but to add a burden that will make recovery even more difficult. Returning them to society will be hard enough. Peter Porteous, Sunnybank, School Lane, Nuthourne, Chichester, W Sussex PO18 8RZ.

A Country Diary

SOMERSET: The April spirit that sent Chaucer's folk on pilgrimages seems, in our village, to have aroused a widespread fervour for fund-raising. There are projects to sustain two of its four public buildings, the church and the village hall. The others (the school and inn) have their own continuous and well-tried ways of staying healthy in business. At the church's annual meeting, 19 people confidently addressed the fact that the tower was crumbling, and that the sums required to pay for repairs will, in relation to the tiny size of the congregation, be enormous. But never mind the sociological upheavals and acute shortage of clergy in the countryside, the April spirit affirmed that the tower will be saved. Meanwhile, the cricket and football clubs are thriving and badly need proper changing facilities. These can be provided by adding an extension to the village hall, which will also enhance provision for school drama, the dog-training class, the Women's Institute and the

Badminton club, as well as attracting new users. So one group of people is preparing for a grand launch of the church tower appeal in September, while a quite separate group has already begun to raise money for the hall. Perhaps there was a touch of irony about starting in Wincanton's new out-of-town supermarket. People who raise money to conserve rural places and institutions might be expected to line up with the protesters against such alien things as hypermarkets. But — as funnels of icy wind were sent rattling between the sets of automatic doors each time one of the Boy Scouts moved (they were competing with a coin trail outside, to fund repairs to their hut) — we shamelessly accepted the hospitality that sheltered us and the generosity that donated the prizes. We hope the sun will shine on the trinket stall and plant sale in May, the coffee morning in June, and especially on the tombola, treasure-hunt and barbecue in July. JOHN VALLINS

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Diary
Matthew Norman

Shock news from the world of comedy, an unfancied runner has emerged from nowhere as the greatest satirist of the age. It is David Montgomery, the sallow, Ulsterman who runs Mirror Group Newspapers. On learning that he and second wife Heidi Kingstone, a freelance writer, have separated, he wrote for a comment. After all, with new divorce legislation at so delicate a stage, the marital status of one who controls five newspapers (with combined circulation second only to Murdoch's) must be relevant. Public interest... that's what News of the World editors — and dear Monty was once one himself — always say. The next day the call was returned — not by Monty, however, but by a lawyer, expressing concern at the prospect of a "mischievous" (the liberty) story, and hoping there would be no need to issue a libel writ. Anything written would, it was suggested, be an invasion of Monty's privacy — a fantastic joke made even funnier on Sunday, when Monty allowed both the People and Sunday Mirror to run telephone shots of Anthea Turner sunbathing on holiday; the Mirror even showed a naked breast. David Montgomery, ironist of genius... shall wonders never cease?

FERGIE, the Daily Express, is talking to American publishers about "potentially the most intimate royal book ever". Before distress sets in, I should point out that the story has not been confirmed. Not yet. That comes next Sunday, when Taki-Gorge states in the Sunday Times that such a thing could never happen. Widely regarded as the world's leading Fergie expert, T-G's recent statement that Johnny Bryan would never kiss and tell (more from him in the Sunday papers) was not his debut triumph several years ago, he announced with certainty that under no circumstances was the Duchess nesting with Steve Wyatt. There simply is no substitute, is there, for reliable inside knowledge?

LESS than a fortnight before it comes out in paperback, arrangements for launching Terry Major-Bak's book remain uncertain. "My friend Peter Stingfellow did offer his club, but I didn't want to ask if he meant it was free," says Terry. "He's such a nice man, and I'd hate him to think I was trying to get something out of him. Peter's way of life is a bit different from mine, I suppose," adds Terry, "but when you chat, you find out there's so much more depth to him than journalists let on." Terry recently met Mr Stingfellow's girl, Helen Benoist, who is 16. "She was very funny," he says, "and a very nice young lady indeed."

HOW sad to note that the Without Walls show Psychoanalysis Diana has been withdrawn by Channel 4. Michael Grade pulled it after the Princess described her submission to Freudian analysis by a complete stranger as "mental rape". Our sympathies, then, to Michael Jones, whose production company Pan Optic made the film. Mr Jones's previous contribution to Without Walls, incidentally, was a film in the "Bad Ideas Of The 20th Century" series that took the form of a complete hatchet job on Freud and his methods. "It was a little distressed you remembered that one," says Mr Jones, jovially. "Since then, I have come round to Freud."

ENCLOSING a photo taken in what looks like a half-of-residence bedroom, Jane Bickerstaffe writes from Edinburgh offering herself as a potential Mrs Andrew Nell. A second letter and the photo will be forwarded to Andrew forthwith, and we wish them well. Discount MS, as Andrew would style her — Bickerstaffe is now the only runner in the race. Previous applicant Angela Hunt has withdrawn after learning that counting Andrew necessitates socialising with his chum Michael Winner.



Justice being seen to be done

Commentary Hugo Young

THE was when the appointment of a Lord Chief Justice aroused so much interest as the installation of the Lord Mayor of London. The priesthood produced its natural successor, and nobody outside the Inns of Court gave a damn. Lord Taylor's sudden retirement exposes a new reality: it is a personal tragedy. Here is the most hazy and the bravest of modern LCJs who, had fate allowed him more than four years in the job, would probably have become a great one. At it's a public calamity too, it comes at a moment when the choice of successor can neither be neutral, and when people who make it have but lost their own legitimacy. A job once naturally seen as apolitical has become charged with sensitivities that have the highest political voltage. Yet the system of filling it gives all power to a prime minister who is in the way out in the state of the law, there has seldom been an appointment in such

danger of being mishandled. In the old days, the Lord Chancellor mostly did it. It's true that Winston Churchill promised the job as a reward to one of his cabinet ministers, Walter Monckton, but the vacancy did not occur in time. Most prime ministers have deferred to their legal advisers, the Lord Chancellor chief among them, and for the first three post-war decades the collaboration worked well enough. A typical conspiracy of silence permitted Lord Widgery (LCJ 1971-80) to continue in the post while mentally unfit to do so. But nobody thought to challenge the very English oddity whereby the entire upper bench is a patronage opportunity for the government of the day. Judge and minister co-existed in a tacit understanding of the lines that divide their proper spheres of action. Things began to change in the 80s. This re-alignment is one of the unacknowledged outcomes of the combative Thatcher years. The party of law and order found itself angling with the agents of the law in a way that began to rouse fear among these humanitarians for the order they were accustomed to administering. For a time, Lord Lane (LCJ 1989-92) refused to talk to the Home Secretary, William Whitelaw. Their meetings were the usual channel through which judiciary and executive communicated, but Lane was so incensed by some

observations Whitelaw had made about sentencing that he decided to assert the independence of the judiciary by sending him to Coventry. This was still within the rules of the game. Like Widgery's madness, it remained a professional secret. The defining shift in the temper of the times occurred in 1987, when Lord MacKay, on becoming Lord Chancellor, moved immediately to amend the rigid rules hitherto debarring judges from speaking on pretty well anything except from the bench. The rules were already fraying, especially on the radio, where judges began to take part in sedate discussion of their work without bringing down the Temple. MacKay was opening a door he couldn't keep shut. But it was taken off its hinges in 1989, the year when silence finally began to be supplanted by the full-blooded controversy between judges and politicians which is now in danger of becoming commonplace. Again, MacKay was the agent. In that year, his proposal to reform the legal profession and end the barristers' monopoly attracted more intense criticism, even harsher, than the judicial brotherhood has ever unleashed upon its leader. Lord Scarman, called the Scottish interloper, the very day the feeding frenzy happened. He believes, in sum, that justice is better served if sentencing is left to

them to "a toothbrush moustache and a swastika armband" standing on the doorstep. Even then, the judiciary's evolution from priestly silence to breast-beating controversialism was a limited threat to old norms. This dispute was confined, after all, to the profession of the law itself. It hurt MacKay but did not ignite his more political colleagues. For that explosion, we had to await the arrival of Lord Taylor in the Strand, shortly followed by Michael Howard at the Home Office. It is the turf-battle between these upholders of two estates of the realm that has created what amounts to a constitutional dispute, and makes the selection of Taylor's successor so peculiarly sensitive. The more Mr Howard has insisted on politicising the criminal law, the more

Judges are independent, and do not behave like a herd. But the LCJ is the leader, and sets the tone

ferociously has Lord Taylor challenged the evidence on which he does so, and the judicial prerogatives he seeks to override. Taylor is moved less by liberalism than by respect for the properties. He supported ending the right to silence, and has never challenged the law-making supremacy of Parliament. But he contests most of the diet with which Howard assuages the Conservative Party Conference, and last year did so quite openly, to everyone's astonishment, the very day the feeding frenzy happened. He believes, in sum, that justice is better served if sentencing is left to

individual judges deciding individual cases, not seized by ministers whose driving motive is appeasement of the Sun and the Daily Mail. There is no doubt that most of his profession agree with him. This is an argument between judges and politicians that is as combustible as it is unresolved.

There are others, all of them wearing on the post that has to be filled. The expansion of judicial review, whereby judges have gathered the power to assess an accumulation of ministers' administrative decisions, is a huge growth of the Thatcher era. The Government has won most cases, but lost some famous ones that made ministers, not least Mr Howard, look like lawless bastards. The two estates glare at each other across barricades that have ceased to be a matter of cosy establishment mutuality. Not far down the road is the prospect of the European Convention on Human Rights, incorporated into British law, enlarging still further the political terrain into which judges will have the power, indeed the duty, to move. How this ground will be walked by the judiciary will depend quite critically on the character of the next Lord Chief Justice. Judges are independent persons, and do not behave like a herd. One can't always ascribe collective views to them. But the LCJ is the leader, and sets the tone. He will have the choice either of reinforcing the judicial function as it has evolved, or of ordaining a retreat. Which bias he offers is a matter of intense interest to politicians, who are now presented with an unexpected opportunity to deflect the course of justice. It is not right that the chances should fall to a single, uninvited party leader, whose time is all but over.

Thursday: Who it should be, and how



When the music stops

Chris Smith believes that by getting people off benefit and into work, Labour can fight poverty and exclusion but still cut social-security spending

TONY BLAIR has made clear that a new Labour government will be judged on its success in two fields: improving standards in education for the majority and reforming the welfare state. This morning at Church House I shall be setting out, in a lecture to the Institute for Public Policy Research, a number of the principles that will shape Labour's approach to the welfare state as we move towards a new century. Sadly, much of the debate has been hijacked by wild speculation about Labour's approach to post-16 education and child benefit. Let me state the outset put the record straight. At present there is a whole range of different sources of funding for education up to age 16, including grants, support for fees, allowances, educational maintenance awards and child benefit. There is little rationality and little equity about the present system, and Gordon Brown and I are undertaking a serious review of this range of provision, to see if something better can be put together. Nobody would doubt that arising from this review, we will bring forward proposals to improve or diminish the incentives for pupils to stay on at school or opt for further education. I assume that we have already reached a decision to integrate the entire review process. We haven't

yet decided to make provision in our own lives, when we are earning and able to do so, for those times when we can't. The postwar welfare state was essentially a marriage of convenience between the state and individual responsibility, and it must remain so today. Building on those principles, our welfare state will have a number of key objectives: it must tackle poverty, insecurity and exclusion; it must provide incentives to work, not disincentives; it must protect the insurance principle and roll back the tide of means-testing; it must support individual effort and protect families; it must provide genuine help to the individual citizen, not just a handout of money; it must remove fraud and inefficiency from the system as far as possible. Much of what the present Government has done has undermined this combination of principles. It has, for example, extended massively the quantity of means-testing in the system — up from 17 per cent in 1979 to 35 per cent now. And although any social-security system has to have some means-testing as part of it, a doubling of this kind cannot be sensible. Means tests not only end up with a large number of those who qualify for a particular entitlement failing to get it, but they also reduce incentives to save and work. The individual responsibility is diminished by the way in which the community responsibility is delivered. The present Government has presided over several other disastrous changes to the social-security system as well. Inequality has risen, with the Rowntree report a year ago showing conclusively that the poor have got poorer and the rich richer in

Tory Britain; and not only that, the gap has been growing faster in Britain than in any other developed country, except New Zealand. Far from curbing the social-security budget, the Government has seen it rise and rise. The number of people dependent on benefit has doubled in 17 years, from one in 12 to one in six. It has also managed to increase levels of poverty in our country, and yet, astonishingly, they then turn round and try to pretend that it doesn't exist. It's a Third World problem, ministers tell us, not something we need to worry about here. Well, it clearly is, and a short walk away from Westminster would have shown ministers exactly what the reality is that faces many pensioners, people who are facing long-term unemployment, and parents struggling to bring up children in modern Britain. And it is not only the lack of decent income that matters; it is the exclusion from everything else that forms part of civil society — a warm home, an unpolluted environment, a street or estate free of crime, the chance of a decent education. Poverty must be measured not only in pounds and pence but in life-chances too. The real answer to poverty and exclusion, however, is not to throw money at the problem through the benefit system. There are some who argue that the best test of how progressive a welfare policy is, is the amount of money that is spent on it. I disagree. High social-security spending is a sign of failure, not a sign of success. It isn't utopian people's benefits that saves money for the national economy on welfare. It is helping

Buggins' turn on the road to Damascus



Catherine Bennett

GOOD morning Sue, good morning Sue, good morning everyone! The recent, tragic news that Thought For The Day is to have a "less churchy feel" may have led some listeners to question their faith. How, they will ask, can a just and merciful God permit such a dreadful thing to happen? But it is not His fault. God has given us the gift of free will. And free will brings with it responsibilities; we cannot escape the consequences of our actions. The sacking of three wise and worthy churchmen from Thought For The Day is a reflection on us all. It is a sign of what happens when we turn away from the moral laws God has laid down. As we read in Deuteronomy, such disobedience does not go unpunished: "In the morning, thou shalt say, Would God it were morning, that I might repent, and be obedient unto the voice of the Lord my God, that I might not have perished. For thou shalt say, Where is the Lord, whom I have forsaken? For thou shalt say, Where is the Lord, whom I have forsaken? For thou shalt say, Where is the Lord, whom I have forsaken?" The secularisation of the Thought For The Day may be just the beginning of our sorrows. If the producer of the Today programme is smiling in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore blotch that cannot be healed, from the sole of his foot unto the top of his head, then we should be sympathetic of course — but we can hardly feel surprised. The reformation of Thought For The Day has already brought down the wrath of some of our premier laymen — and clerics, indignant that their favourite pulpit should be shared with a gang of worldly usurers who offer nothing but a "moral or spiritual perspective on eventful issues and personalities". That devout columnist Paul Johnson has demanded that the thought be "genuinely sacred", which to him, translates as "simple, traditional Christianity". Johnson fails to explain why religious enlightenment needs to be supplied by a radio station. If a man of his calibre requires a dose of moral improvement before breakfast, he can surely devise his own religious exercises; if radio transmission is essential to his devotion, perhaps he could tune into one of the many other religious broadcasts, from Prayer For The Day, to the Daily Service, which are still imposed on the public by the BBC in its sacred mission to persecute non-believers. Alternatively, Mr Johnson could seek out a church, one of those large buildings, often identifiable by a spire, constructed solely for the purpose of religious worship. It is here, after all, that preaching has most meaning. A sermon makes most sense to followers of the faith being promulgated, which is why the half-baked homilies on Thought For The Day are at once so inadequate for believers such as Mr Johnson, and so pointless for everyone else. The audience of the Today programme, into which the Thought intrudes, is not a congregation, united by religious conviction, but a section of the public, characterised by nothing but a desire to keep up with the news. To preach to such an audience is not only meaningless, but insufferably patronising. Every morning we are treated as savages by the BBC's bossy band of missionaries, without even the recompense of a handful of shiny beads. As they struggle to square human misery with divine goodness, few Thinkers resist the opportunity to reprimand their captive audience for failing to abide by the precepts of the religion of the day. Nadeem Kazmi, a Moslem contributor, chooses the words of the grandson of Mohammed to warn us against "the evil within ourselves". He reminds us that we are all "sinners", and that we should "repentance for neglecting 'our own sense of fallibility and sin'". Ahkandadi Das chastises us for eschewing Hindu asceticism. Colin Morris, a Methodist, recently alerted listeners to the sin of excessive nationalism, arguing that God "offers hope only for humanity, not for some section or elite or favoured part of it". Can this be the same Almighty who once advised his favourites, "the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth?" DEFENDERS of the Thought should be aware that far from providing spiritual uplift, these fragments of sanitised EI reliably excite powerful sensations of derision and disgust. There are those, for example, who on hearing the whimsical chirrupings of Rabbi Lionel Blue, or the treacly admonitions of Lavinia Byrne, are possessed by an impious desire to smack their heads. If any of these Thinkers ever engaged in thought, they might consider that ministering to their flocks is a more fruitful occupation than adding to the daily irritations of millions. By operating the venerable system of Buggins' Turn, all of these beliefs are effectively nullified, shown to be negligible. Thought For The Day is the very definition of a sop, or to put it another way, our most worthy pioneer of cultural relativism. Any further step down this path can only be welcomed by all who find the faithful ludicrous.

New Internationalist magazine

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Small print: We need an entirely new philosophy of welfare and social security in this country. Instead of consigning a large section of our society into a near-permanent condition of unemployment, we should be exerting every effort to help them through unemployment and into work. Too often we tend to regard the job of the Department of Social Security as one of rather grudgingly handing out gilts to Dickensian supplicants. We need to transform that role into one of providing genuine help to citizens in seeking to regain a foothold in society. That way we will begin to secure genuine social justice for the people who need it most.

Chris Smith MP is Labour's social-security spokesman

8A2GC

William Colby

In the name of freedom

AMAN of the moderate left who became director of the Central Intelligence Agency, William Colby, who has died aged 76, was the living embodiment of the dark suspicion of American conservatives that the CIA was the haunt of liberals, social democrats and pacifists. But he also embodied the worst fears of the left, that such service in espionage would inevitably pollute even the most firmly held democratic convictions.

He was an emblematic figure of the moral ambiguities of America's cold war. The implacable and utterly ruthless way Colby fought against totalitarian communism, and against those he saw as Red Nazis, contrasted sharply with his belief that the West was and must remain in the moral right. He never worried about ends and means. Against a totalitarian foe, the threat to democracy justified almost anything.

For conservative colleagues he was something very close to a traitor, the CIA head who revealed its innermost secrets of assassinations and domestic crimes to a vengeful Congress in its inquisitorial year of 1976. For liberals, he was something close to a heretic as the CIA's mastermind in South Vietnam of the notorious Phoenix programme: a counter-guerrilla operation waged in the villages and jungles, which in the jargon of the time "accounted for" tens of thousands of Vietcong agents, officials and sympathisers.

Colby was, by American standards, a political progressive all his life. He helped organise petrol pump workers into a trade union before the second world war, and after it canvassed enthusiastically for Harry Truman's re-election. When retired he became a leading advocate of the nuclear freeze. Most recently he was campaigning to slash the US defence budget by half to invest the money in schools, hospitals and job training.



'Intelligence is too damn important to be left to the spies'

— William Colby

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"I am William Colby and I was head of the CIA," he announced over national TV in a series of advertisements during the 1992 campaign season. "The job of intelligence is to warn us of dangers to our national security. During the cold war, those dangers were military. The cold war is over, and the military threat is now far less. It's time to cut our military budget by 50 per cent and to invest that money in our schools, our health care and our economy."

The ads were paid for by the Coalition for Democratic Values, a liberal organisation which Colby joined with Paul Warnke, the veteran Democrat arms control negotiator.

At the same time, Colby

was devoting considerable time to advising the post-Soviet governments of eastern Europe and the new Boris Yeltsin administration on ways to replace the KGB structures with a democratised intelligence service, under political control.

"Intelligence is too damn important and too damn dangerous to be left to the spies, or left to the government," Colby told his colleagues on the Committee of Western Sovietologists that was drafting a memorandum for Yeltsin on the need to break up the KGB.

Colby rose to the post of CIA, appointed to the post by President Richard Nixon at the height of the Watergate dramas, because of the legend of daring and ruthless dedication that had followed him since his adventures in Nazi-occupied Europe in 1944.

Code-named Berkshire, Colby was one of three British and US agents parachuted

into the Département of the Yonne on August 14, 1944, to rally the Maquis guerrillas under Operation Jedburgh, and to destroy the rail links connecting Paris to Lyon. Dropping on to what they thought were signal lamps, they fell into a village that was being burned by German troops and spent the next day and night hiding in a ditch as the Germans searched for them. But Berkshire went on to complete his mission.

A slim and self-effacing man, Colby once described himself as "the traditional grey man, so inconspicuous that he can never catch the waiter's eye in a restaurant". He was born into the comfort-

able Wasp upper-middle class, went to Burlington school in Vermont, then to Princeton, and took his law degree at Columbia.

After the war he went briefly into the private law practice he had always intended, before being recruited back into intelligence. Although he had served in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) — the forerunner of the CIA — during the war and become a protégé of its legendary chief, "Wild Bill" Donovan, Colby did not join the new CIA immediately. Instead he went into the Office of Policy Coordination, whose establishment as a covert arm of the State Department had been recommended by George F Kennan, desperate to find some way to prevent Italy from voting communist.

Colby served under diplomatic cover in Rome and in Sweden, running agents inside the Soviet Union through the Baltics, and also running agents into the Italian Communist Party. It was in Italy that he began his great feud with James Jesus Angleton, an extraordinary personal clash which shook even as vast an institution as the CIA.

Angleton, inherently suspicious of Soviet cunning after being duped by the double agent Kim Philby, believed that nothing in cold war strategy should ever be taken at face value. As head of counter-espionage and chief mole-hunter at the CIA, he had the power to give his paranoid fantasies full rein. The Sino-Soviet split was a ploy to lull the West, so was Czechoslovakia's Prague Spring in 1968, and so was the Italian Socialist Party, which Angleton insisted was a stalking horse for the communists.

Colby, from his Italian vantage point, disagreed. The whole point of the CIA's political strategy in the cold war, he insisted, was to define the difference between the moderate left and the communists. Indeed, he maintained that the cold war could only be won in alliance with social democrats, and was content to be known as one of them.

Colby despised communists and took his passion to South Vietnam as CIA station chief from 1968-69, where he argued hard against the Kennedy administration's growing dissatisfaction with the anti-communist and Catholic regime of Ngo Dinh Diem. Colby was overruled.

"I can't remember a serious conversation about who would take over from Diem. There were only vague references to the generals", he recalled, still baffled to explain why "our government could have been so blind as to have contributed directly to his (Diem's) overthrow and death."

From 1962 to 1967 he was head of the CIA for the Far East and was about to be given the plum job of running the CIA's Soviet desk when the Vietnam Embassy persuaded President Johnson to send him back to Saigon. Colby was "seconded" to the Agency for International Development until 1971, ostensibly to run rural development programmes.

In fact, he was taking the dirtiest of wars to the enemy, fighting fire with fire to counter the Vietcong strategy of assassinating and intimidating village chiefs and rural officials across the country. It was a job he had brought upon himself, after the reports he had sent back in 1961-62.

"We began to receive reports of increased incidents: the selective assassination of a village chief, a midnight attack on an isolated security post in which the guards were killed and the weapons confiscated; the evening assembly of villagers for a discussion of the evils of the American-Diemist regime; the conscription of a group of village youths to augment the guerrilla unit in the nearby jungle, supplemented by the collection of taxes and contributions to help defray the costs of the campaign," Colby wrote in his memoirs.

His reports caught the attention of the new President Kennedy, whose own speeches on "the new kind of



Word of honour... Colby is sworn in at the Oval Office as head of the CIA in September 1973. Among the witnesses are President Nixon and Henry Kissinger

war" quoted almost verbatim from Colby's cables, Colby always believed that had Kennedy survived he would not have widened the conflict, and would not have made Lyndon Johnson's mistake of sending a vast and cumbersome US Army to fight a guerrilla war.

"The US reaction was that this was a soldier's war. It was not. It was a guerrilla war. I should know," he argued. "I was one."

In his book, *Lost Victory*, Colby subsequently argued that his merciless campaign against the Vietcong had ended in victory by 1971, and that it was only after the Vietcong's defeat that North Vietnam deployed its regular forces into a straightforward military invasion to win the war. There was some truth in this. But most historians judge that Hanoi's decision to sacrifice the Vietcong cadres by hurling them against American firepower in the 1968 Tet offensive was probably more important in destroying the Vietcong in the South.

Colby was thought to have done well enough to be brought home in 1971 and appointed Executive Director-Comptroller, the CIA's third-ranking job. His supporter within the agency was Richard Helms, who was fighting his rear-guard battle against President Nixon's attempt to politicise the CIA.

Helms was sacked by Nixon

immediately after the 1972 election. Colby later wrote that this "had to do with Helms's careful distancing of the agency from Watergate, his refusal to allow it to be used in the cover-up."

Watergate helped create a climate of mistrust and exposure which began in turn to sap the CIA. Once under investigation for possible abuse of its functions, the new director, James Schlesinger, ordered the CIA bureaucracy in May, 1973 — more than a year before Nixon resigned — to prepare a full list of possibly

renamed former members of Congress.

After Schlesinger was promoted to secretary of defence, Colby was appointed director of the CIA, and began to reveal some of the "family jewels" to congressional committees. There were leaks, as the New York Times began publishing the accounts. The newly-installed President Ford incautiously confirmed much of the tale in an off the record lunch with New York Times editors, and Colby was told called before Congress to give public evidence.

The supporters of Helms claim Colby threw his old chief to the woves. Colby said he simply obeyed the law.

"Every time Bill Colby gets near Capitol Hill, the damn fool feels an irresistible urge to confess to some horrible crime," grumbled Henry Kissinger.

In fact, Colby was saving Kissinger from hideous embarrassment, hally sacking Angleton just as the old counter-espionage chief had begun an inquiry into the possibility that Kissinger was a Soviet mole.

Washington in the 1970s was an extraordinary place of intrigue and exposures, of back-stabbing and high principle, and Colby can fairly be said to have done both nobly and shamefully. He told the truth to Congress, and broke the code of the CIA.

In the great dilemma over

the ethics of espionage and covert operations that confront democracies, William Colby will be remembered as one who chose openness, under the conviction that the elected politicians know best. He will equally be remembered by his peers in intelligence as the man who unravelled the secrets, and as the great betrayer.

And in the rural hamlets of the Mekong delta, there are still widows and orphans of the wretched war that Colby fought in the name of anti-communism. His claim of victory in South Vietnam is as clouded as his claim of success in saving Italian democracy from the communists, only to see so much of it fall under the poisonous sway of the Mafia.

And while the CIA was roasting on the spit of domestic controversy, it was failing in its fundamental duty. It failed to predict the Egyptian attack in what became the Yom Kippur war, failed to foresee the Indian nuclear test explosion, or the coups in Portugal and in Cyprus. The coup the CIA did know about was the toppling of Allende in Chile, the elected socialist leader whose ideology was, by cruel irony, more sympathetic to Colby than the politics of his own president.

'Vietnam was a guerrilla's war. I should know, Colby argued, 'I was one'

illegal operations. Known as "the family jewels", these became 680 pages of single-spaced typewriting.

They detailed assassination plots against Patrice Lumumba in the Congo and against Fidel Castro of Cuba. They listed the massive mail-tampering and intelligence-gathering operations run inside the US, in defiance of the CIA charter which outlawed such domestic activity. They cited files on 7,200 US citizens, including 14 cur-

rented former members of Congress.

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Martin Walker

William Egan Colby, born January 4, 1920; died April 27, 1996

Beryl Burton

Timing her rides to perfection

BERYL Burton, who was found dead beside her bike on a Yorkshire roadside on Sunday, was more than just a great cyclist: for more than a quarter of a century "BB", as she was usually known, was an institution, the dominant figure in British women's bike racing.

"Beryl was not just one of the greatest cyclists, but in my opinion she was one of the greatest athletes of all time," said Peter McGrath, chairman of the Road Time Trials Council.

That this coming Saturday, a day before her 59th birthday, she was to have taken part in the women's national 10 mile time trial, a race which she had won several years of ill health, she stood no chance of winning, underlines the fact that her love of competition — beginning in the days of truly amateur sport, went beyond even her hundreds of world and national championship medals.

Burton was in the finest tradition of a line of British cycling greats, currently represented by Chris Boardman: she was a specialist in the solitary-skill of racing against the watch on road and track who gained national and international stardom largely by working outside the system with little or no help from the sport's governing bodies.

Typical of this was the fact that when she took her first world title in the track pursuit in Liège in 1959, she paid her own way to the start. She won a further five world

suit titles, and took two world road championships, both in the only style she knew — using her strength against the watch to win alone, with the rest of the field chasing her.

The Yorkshire lass's domination of British women's time trialing began in 1968 and will never be repeated. For 25 consecutive years Burton was crowned British Best All Rounder, a title awarded for the fastest woman over the set distances of 25, 50 and 100 miles. She won the national 25-mile title 26 times, the 50-mile title 24 times, the 100-mile title 18 times, landing her final gold medals in 1996 at the age of 49. Her national records at 25, 50 and 100 miles — some set in 1978 at the age of 39 — still stand, while it took 20 years for her 10-mile record to fall.

More impressive, however, were her performances against the men of the time, who were regularly beaten by the dimple-checked curly-haired "slip of a lass". The legend was born when she topped the men's record for the 12-hour event, covering 277.25 miles in the set time.

On her way, she caught and passed Mike McNamara, who although beaten on the day by Burton, was on his way to a British men's record for the distance — a record which was actually lower than the women's distance set by Burton.

Burton recalled in her autobiography *Personal Best* that after 223 miles she caught and passed McNamara, who had started two minutes before



Personal best... 'BB' was a great cyclist and a great athlete PHOTOGRAPH: EAMONN MCCABE

her. "I thought some gesture was required on my part. I was carrying a bag of Liquorice Allsorts in the pocket of my jersey. I pulled one out. 'Liquorice Allsort, Mac?' I shouted. He gave a wan smile. 'Ta love'."

There were other feats

when she set a women's 100-mile record in a time of three hours and 55 minutes. Burton was also the fourth fastest cyclist of either sex in Britain over the distance and again beat the best man comfortably. A cycling writer at the time compared the achievement to a woman breaking

the four-minute mile by "a substantial margin".

Burton's solitary competitive streak can be traced to her schooldays, when she set herself increasingly tough standards for the playground game of bouncing a ball against a wall. After a brief excursion into swimming,



Champion career

- Burton's glittering prizes:
- World road champion: 1960-1967
 - World pursuit champion: 1969, 1960, 1962, 1963, 1965
 - British road champion: 1963, 1960, 1963, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974
 - British pursuit champion: 1960, 1961, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974
 - British 10 mile champion: 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981
 - British 25 mile champion: 1958-1982 (except 1965), 1984, 1986
 - British 50 mile champion: 1958-1980 (except 1962), 1983, 1986
 - British 100 mile champion: 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1980, 1981
 - British Best All Rounder: 1969-1983

the birth of her daughter Denise in 1955 with full-time jobs and punishing training schedules.

She was a truly amateur cyclist: some employers, such as the GPO, were less than helpful when it came to fitting in world championship trips, while in the mid-1960s she was putting in punishing shifts in a mark garden run by a local rival. He remained loyal to the amateur Morley Cycling Club for the whole of her career.

Apart from occasional sporting failures — notably several frustrated bids at the world one-hour race and a disastrous attempt on the men and women 24-hour title and record when her knees gave out after she had taken a commanding lead, there were to be few other major sources of frustration in Burton's life.

One was that, in spite of her MBE in 1964 and OBE in 1985, the British press never recognised her feats. He complained that her British 12-hour record for both sexes made the bottom of page seven of the Yorkshire Evening Post. "If she had achieved comparable feats in a more popular sport such as tennis, often being the top male competitor of the day, she would have been a household name around the world," commented a lifelong associate.

Burton's own regret involved her relationship with her daughter: "he built a good international career in her mother's shadow, but could not avoid becoming her rival in the early 1970s.

The bitterness between the two women was such that after they had both sprinted neck and neck for the gold medal in the 75 British road race title, Burton would not shake her daughter's hand. In spite of a tearful reconciliation after meeting to head in the British seek championships later that year, relations could never be the same again.

her ability on two wheels became obvious when she met her future husband, Charlie Burton, an amateur cyclist from her home town of Leeds.

Charlie was to provide support for the next 40 years as Burton juggled the family commitments which followed

William Fotteringham

Beryl Burton, cyclist, born May 12, 1937; died May 6, 1996

Cardinal Suenens

CARDINAL Leon-Joseph Suenens, who died yesterday at the age of 81, was a leading figure in attempts to modernise the Roman Catholic Church in the 1960s. He urged greater contacts with other Christian denominations and an increased role for women. He was appointed Archbishop of the diocese of Brussels-Mechelen in 1961 and Primate of Belgium in 1962 — a position he held until his self-imposed retirement in 1980. There will be an obituary in the Guardian tomorrow.

Birthdays

- Stevie Nicks, singer, 51
- Teresa Brewer, actress and singer, 65
- Lord Briggs, historian, 75
- Peter Carey, author, 53
- Prof Alan Cutler, Master, Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, 64
- Mik Flood, director, ICA, 47
- Prof Robert Gooden, architect, 87
- Sir James Gowans, medical researcher, 72
- The Rt Rev Robert Halliday, Bishop of Brechin, 64
- Robin Hanbury-Tenison, explorer and author, 60
- David Hatch, chairman, National Consumer Council, 57
- Sir Michael Hopkins, architect, 61
- Lord Kirkhill, former Lord Provost of Aberdeen, 66
- David Leach, potter, 38
- Sir Neil Macfarlane, chairman, Securicor, 60
- Dr Tony O'Reilly, chairman and chief executive, RTI, former Irish rugby footballer, 51
- Richard O'Sullivan, actor, 52
- Ruth Praver Jhalvalla, author, 68
- Michael Rosen, poet and writer, 50
- Lynn Saville, photographer, 46
- Elizabeth Söderstrom, soprano, 68
- Mary Spillane, founder, Colour Me Beautiful, 46
- David Tomlinson, actor, 73

In Memoriam

BROOKS, Laura (née Nichols). In loving memory of Laura Brooks, born the 29th May 1922, died 17 November 1995. Forever in our thoughts. Daphne and Marjorie.

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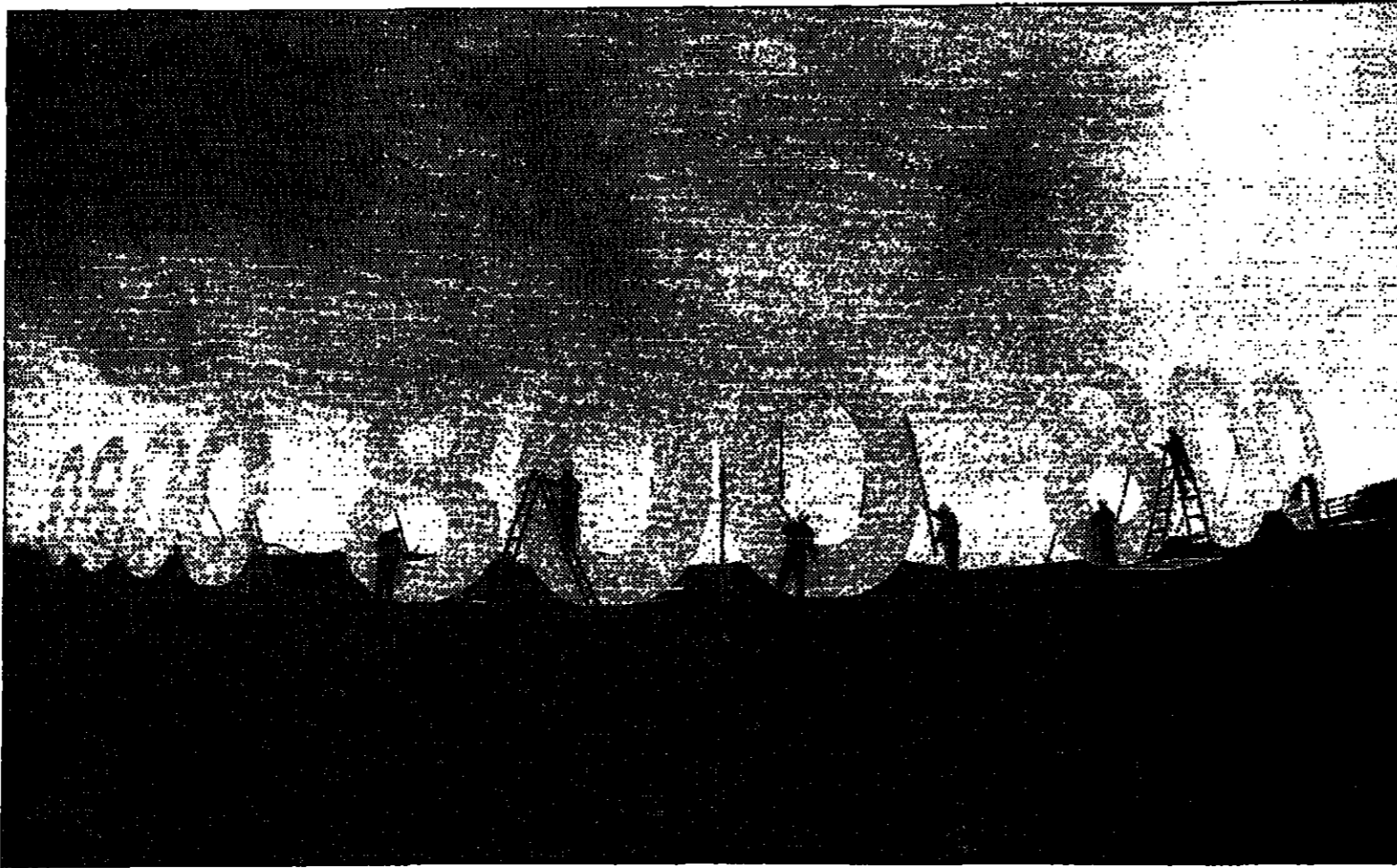
Handwritten signature or scribble at the bottom of the page.

One moment, caller, we're just checking that new BT number for you

DRIVERS in the Exeter area today are in for a big surprise. Britain's largest telephone number, with digits 20 feet high - pictured right - has been installed at the junction of the M5 and the A30 to mark a new BT service.

The free helpline, on 0800 800 800, links callers to Business Connections, designed to give small and medium companies advice on telecommunications. The number, which replaces 152 for business customer enquiries, will offer tips on computers, telephones, information technology and price discounts.

Sue Davidson, director of Business Connections, said the service would "focus all BT's wealth of resource and expertise on the needs of smaller and medium-sized businesses".



Bulletin Higher hurdle for loan scheme

HUNDREDS of small firms that received state support last year will be ineligible to apply this year because the Government has changed the terms and conditions of its Loan Guarantee Scheme with effect from September 1, 1996.

Barbara Roche, Labour's small business spokeswoman, says a parliamentary written answer shows that about 700 fewer firms will qualify for the loans under the new rules. "The Government claims it wants Britain to be the enterprise centre of Europe, and yet the minister has admitted that he is slashing help to small firms by 10 per cent." The Loan Guarantee Scheme was introduced in 1981 to provide development capital to growing small firms that could not obtain loans from conventional sources because they were unable to offer security. The scheme, administered by the Department of Trade and Industry, grants loans for a minimum of two years.

It currently provides an 85 per cent guarantee on qualifying loans up to a maximum of £250,000 for established businesses trading for two years or more at the time of application. For other businesses the guarantee is fixed at 70 per cent of borrowings up to £100,000.

EIGHT out of 10 British small firms trade solely within the UK and, despite competition from foreign

suppliers, the majority of British small firms have not considered trading abroad.

To help small firms make the most of their export potential, Barclays Bank has produced an Introduction to Importing and Exporting, copies of which are available from branch managers.

FLEDGLING firms in the North-west seeking funds to develop their businesses have found a champion in TechInvest, an agency that matches people with money to invest with companies starved of funds.

Investors are typically business "angels", individuals with cash and expertise to invest where the banks and fund managers fear to trade. For more information contact TechInvest at South & East Cheshire TEC Ltd, Business Link South and East Cheshire, PO Box 37, Dalton Way, Middlewich, Cheshire CW10 0UH.

FEWER management buy-outs and buy-ins chose to float on the stock market in 1995, according to figures produced by the Centre for Management Buy Out Research, based at Nottingham University. Instead there has been an increase in the number of trade sales - as corporate buyers have become more active - and in second buy-outs and buy-ins.

Edited by Colia Weston

Service with a smile please

Assistants often feel servile being polite to customers but such attention is priceless for a small firm, maintains **Suzi Pritchard**

IT WAS lunchtime when I visited a small, local telecommunications shop to buy batteries for the portable telephone I had bought there, persuaded by promises of first-rate, after-sales care. The owner-manager was absent but a young woman sat at his desk, eating a sandwich and flicking through a magazine.

"Er, excuse me..." I began. She put down her magazine but not her food and, in a sullen, irritable way, asked: "Well?" Her manner became positively hostile when I admitted that I didn't know the type of battery I needed.

After some futile disarranging of shelves she ordered me to return later in the week.

I adjourned to a branch of a large multiple where the sales clerk was knowledgeable,

friendly and well-trained. I don't intend to return to the small shop.

Every consumer has horror stories of assistants who gossip while customers fume; waiters who get your order wrong and sneer if you complain; or the butcher's assistant with dirty fingernails, whose only vocabulary seems to be "dunno".

John Nicholson, a psychologist and international authority on customer service who has advised the Cabinet Office and the Nato Taskforce for Bosnia, says customer care is a prime area in which small and medium-sized businesses can compete and do so effectively.

Given a choice, most people purchase goods or services where they feel valued. The lowest price is generally less

important than quality of customer care.

But there remains something peculiarly British in equating service with being servile. On the Continent, service is seen as a mutually enjoyable and rewarding relationship - Sancho Panza shares his master's life.

Americans know that today's waiter can be tomorrow's success story. Mr Nicholson believes the British dislike of providing service was aggravated during the second world war when shortages and rationing allowed the service classes, who had been badly treated by the gentry and newly emerged middle classes, to turn the tables.

HERE is often, too, the unspoken assumption that service occupations require no training.

John Dunn of the RSA, the awarding body for this particular NVQ, says the system is well suited to the needs of small businesses whose staff

are expected to remain with the company and in whom the company wishes to invest.

The qualification can be highly cost-effective and provide the necessary training for those dealing with the public in most areas of commerce.

But customer care training and qualifications are available through the system of National Vocational Qualifications (details from the local Training and Enterprise Council or Local Enterprise Company in Scotland), based on practical achievements and experience with minimal classroom time.

Launched last month, the new Level 2 and Level 3 standards and qualifications have been produced by the Customer Service Lead Body.

Most training providers can design the programme to suit a particular business and grants are sometimes available to cover training costs.

John Dunn of the RSA, the awarding body for this particular NVQ, says the system is well suited to the needs of small businesses whose staff

develop the skills of new and part-time staff as necessary.

Books on customer care are available and BBC for Business has a list of more than 90 training video packages, from Mr Nicholson's Serve Them Right to specialist training for all areas of commerce.

Staff who feel valued and respected are more likely to treat the public in the same way - the essence of good customer care - making shopping or visiting a pub or office, or any establishment that deals with the public, a pleasure for the consumer.

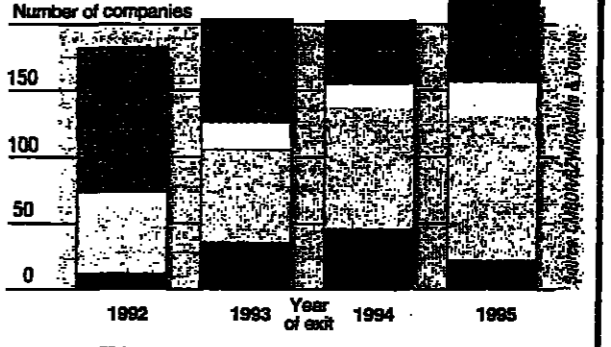
Small businesses are perfectly suited to creating such an atmosphere when customers are treated as people whose preferences matter.

And with so many smaller businesses failing, the investment in staff training can pay the largest dividend of all - a healthy balance sheet and a growing clientele.

Mr Nicholson believes smaller firms could organise their own training programmes at minimal cost to

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Racing

Baroque can do an Italian job on the Derby hopes

Five Derby entries do battle in the Chester Vase today, but victory can go to the only colt not entered at Epsom...

High Baroque had the speed to win over a mile first time out, but he is destined to make his mark over middle distances...

St Mawes, who chased home Storm Trooper in the nine furlong Fellen Stakes at Newmarket, looks a bigger danger...

claiming rider, who won on the stable's Mawing at Warwick yesterday. Michael Tabor, owner of High Baroque, was on the mark with Dr Massini at Kempton yesterday.



Fast filly... Please Suzanne romps home ahead of Baize in yesterday's Ballygallon Stud Stakes at Kempton

Chester runners and riders with TV form

Table listing Chester runners and riders with TV form, including race numbers, names, and TV channels.

Table listing Chester runners and riders with TV form, including race numbers, names, and TV channels.

Newton Abbot (N.H.)

Table listing Newton Abbot (N.H.) runners and riders with TV form.

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Wincanton (N.H.) tonight

Table listing Wincanton (N.H.) runners and riders with TV form.

Doncaster tonight

Table listing Doncaster runners and riders with TV form.

Channel 4

Table listing Channel 4 runners and riders with TV form.

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Results

Table listing racing results for various tracks including Doncaster, Kempton, and Wincanton.

Channel 4

Table listing Channel 4 runners and riders with TV form.

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Table listing Channel 4 runners and riders with TV form.

Advertisement for RACELINE featuring Chester, Newton Abbot, and Wincanton results, with a phone number 0930 1684.

Soccer

David Lacey measures United's title triumph and finds a continuity of method that embraces changing manpower and mood

Ferguson's own red power base

BY WINNING the Premiership title for the third time in four seasons Manchester United have established a pattern of power similar to that achieved by Liverpool in the old First Division from 1973 onwards...



Waving the flag... a young United fan celebrates his favourites' third title in four years outside Old Trafford yesterday

Alex Ferguson is halfway towards equalling Bob Paisley's six titles with Liverpool. He is also on the verge of another unique achievement: he is already the first manager to complete league and cup doubles north and south of the border...

contribution of Cantona. Cantona, matchless though that has been, until October 1 Cantona was the central defender...

about Ferguson fielding a weakened team for a Coca-Cola Cup tie at Burnley. Yet the United side included Butt, Gary Neville, Scholes and Beckham, then little-known graduates from the FA Youth Cup...

Schmeichel's massive assurance has become even more important for United, with injuries to Gary Pallister and Steve Bruce forcing Ferguson to shuffle his defence around...

Asprilla and Cantona bare their souls

Michael Walker

TWO of the least talkative, yet most talked about men in English football, Eric Cantona and Faustino Asprilla, made uncharacteristic public comments yesterday...

and now the season has ended. Nevertheless I have made a big effort to perform for this club and gave as much as I could for the manager...

Asprilla admitted he had found it hard to settle in Newcastle. "I have had problems with the language and it has been very difficult for me," said the Colombian...

"We'll be fighting just as hard next season and I'm very hopeful. I will work hard to bring the title to Newcastle then. The fans are amazing, they have been great to me and I want to repay them."

Commenting on his kung-fu kick at Selhurst Park last year and his subsequent suspension, Cantona said: "There was really a lot of criticism, especially from France, and those who made it thought I deserved it. I thought it was too much. I'm not naive. I know that now there will be a lot of praise and that too will probably be too much."

Francis Lee, the Manchester City chairman, has underlined his determination to keep George Kinkladze at Maine Road. City's relegation from the Premiership is likely to encourage Europe's top clubs to renew their interest in the gifted Georgian midfielder...

Porterfield resigns from Bolton

JAN PORTERFIELD has resigned as assistant manager of Bolton Wanderers a week after the club's relegation from the Premiership...

Southall to end his career at Goodison Park. The Welsh keeper, who will be 38 later this year, has refused a two-year deal...

Pitch threatens England game

Russell Thomas

ABELING pitch, partly yellow and almost bare, threatens to put the skids under England's match with China on May 23. The game, seen by Terry Venables as an important preparation for Euro '96...

Steve Howey fears he will miss England's Euro '96 campaign after being ruled out of Newcastle's last seven games with hamstring trouble...

Sport in brief

Athletics

Roger Black has declared himself unavailable for Great Britain's team at next month's European Cup in Madrid...

Rugby Union

Richmond, newly promoted to Courage League Two, are expected to announce the signing of Bath's England No. 8 Ben Clarke today...

Results

Soccer SPALDING CHALLENGE CUP: Final, second leg: Bromsgrove, 1; Macclesfield 1 (agg 4-3)...

Baseball

AMERICAN LEAGUE: Boston 4, Toronto 1; Detroit 2, Texas 5; Baltimore 1, Milwaukee 15; New York Yankees 4, Chicago 1; Kansas City 2, Oakland 5; California 5, Minnesota 2...

Baseball

AMERICAN LEAGUE: Boston 4, Toronto 1; Detroit 2, Texas 5; Baltimore 1, Milwaukee 15; New York Yankees 4, Chicago 1; Kansas City 2, Oakland 5; California 5, Minnesota 2...

Motor Sport

Frank Biela and the Audi Sport team put their qualifying problems behind them with another impressive Touring Car Championship performance at Thruxton...

Motor Sport

ICE HOCKEY NHL Stanley Cup play-off: San Francisco 4, Pittsburgh 2; Detroit 2, New York Rangers 1; Western Conference: Detroit 6, St Louis 3 (Detroit leads series 2-0)...

Table Tennis

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP (Bratislava): Third round: Steve F. Clark (W) vs M. Sved (S) 21-18, 21-15, 16-21, 21-14; Doubles: Steve F. Clark & J. P. P. (W) vs J. P. P. & J. P. P. (S) 21-18, 21-15, 16-21, 21-14...

Table Tennis

LISA LOMAS failed to add to her four European Championship medals when she was beaten 21-9, 21-9, 21-9, by Ni Xia-Lian, a Chinese left-hander representing Luxembourg...

Golf

Cash keeps following Karrie

David Davies on Karrie Webb, the brilliant young Australian who tops the US money list sponsored by his junior golf foundation in Australia and spent seven days with him in America...

Table Tennis

LISA LOMAS failed to add to her four European Championship medals when she was beaten 21-9, 21-9, 21-9, by Ni Xia-Lian, a Chinese left-hander representing Luxembourg...

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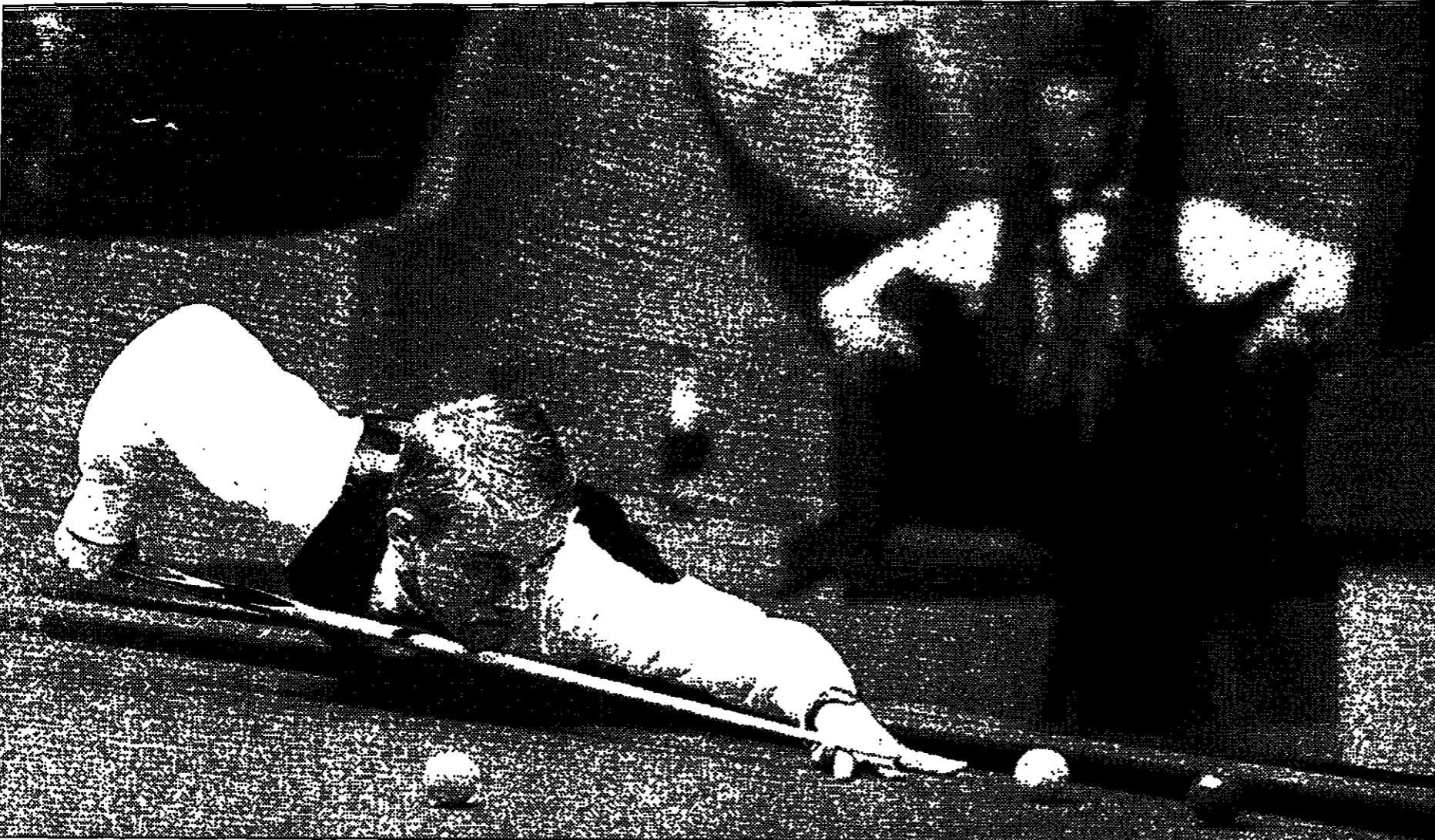
Handwritten signature or mark at the bottom of the page.

The irresistible rise of Karrie Webb, page 14
England reconsider China trip, page 14

Lancashire's batsmen self-destruct, page 15
Benetton ponder Alesi's future, page 15

Sports Guardian

SNOOKER: THE WORLD CHAMPION TURNS THE SCREW ON EBDON



Dead-eye Hendry in his element

David Hopps in Sheffield on a millionaire whose pallid face never gives anything away

AS STEPHEN Hendry inexorably approached a record-equalling sixth Embassy World Championship at the Crucible Theatre last night, the overriding question was whether he would surrender for once to an overt display of melo-

drama: the golfer Nick Faldo a veritable card. By the mid-evening break in last night's final session Hendry led England's Peter Ebdon 17-11, one frame away from matching the record of six wins achieved in modern times by Steve Davis and Ray Reardon. An odds-on favourite before the tournament — his last defeat here was by Steve James in the 1991 quarter-finals — Hendry had described himself

as "a lousy bet" but, being a proud Scot, had probably invested a few quid on himself at 6-4 when briefly trailing in the first round. Three of his five winning finals had been against Jimmy White, whose celebratory potting ability collapsed under the pressure. This year The Whirlwind was replaced by an irksome breeze in the shape of Ebdon, the sort of opponent who might have been designed spe-

cifically to get under his skin. Ebdon's description of his previous three tournament conquests — White, Steve Davis and Ronnie O'Sullivan — as the best trio in the game was interpreted as a deliberate slight upon Hendry. Ebdon's theatrical behaviour — he collapsed in a heap of fake exhaustion after beating Davis and is prone to bellowing "Cumm on!" at himself after winning a close frame — is also as far removed from Hendry's persona as one can get.

Hendry had been dissatisfied with his form here but mentally he was as tough as ever. He is more flexible than he appears on TV. Beneath a face of permanent rigidity is a body of surprising suppleness, which tends to lag slightly behind his head as if about to break into a Groucho Marx walk. By the afternoon's mid-session break Hendry had stretched his 10-6 overnight lead to 13-7, wrapping up the last two frames in only 23 minutes. Ebdon conquered early nerves to take the next three frames, only for Hendry to recover the psychological advantage with a 57 break

which restored his four-frame advantage by the interval. Ebdon knows how to work a crowd. While Hendry strives to be oblivious to their presence, Ebdon indulges in occasional exchanges. A red which dropped only reluctantly into a pocket caused him to exclaim that the audience was "getting value for money". A perfect break-off shot, which left Hendry snookered, saw him stretch out his arms as if inviting adulation, which he duly received. He favours multi-coloured waistcoats that could be used to tune in a TV whenever the test card is unavailable. Yesterday's was a grey and gold number which, after 17 days under the Crucible lights, matched his pallid colouring and the bags under his staring eyes.

Hendry's bags normally have money in them. The 27-year-old was approaching £1 million in winnings for the season, to add to another £1.5 million in endorsements. Those who dismiss him as boring fail to recognise that for a player of such inordinate ability, suppression of emotion can be as intriguing as expression of it.

Victory for the man who came second



Richard Williams

DID YOU see Kevin Keegan on Sunday night, when a season's dreams had just turned to ashes? It was almost enough to give you hope for the human race. Minutes after losing the title to Manchester United, Newcastle's director of football was being asked by Barry Davies if he had a message for Alex Ferguson, with whom he had recently and so publicly fallen out. "In this game," he said, "the winners can laugh and the losers have got to make their own arrangements. So to him, have a good laugh. And I'm going to make my own arrangements, with Terry McDermott, who's the best signing I ever made at this club, to be honest with you. We won't go and have a drink. We'll go and sit somewhere and mope for a couple of hours. We'll soon get over it, we'll have a holiday and we'll be back playing the same way next year, and hopefully we'll just last out a bit better."

care to join the pilgrims at Malden Castle, where the Magpies use Durham University's grounds for training, will see Keegan and his pal McDermott extracting more fun out of a five-a-side game than anyone bar Big Ron. And unlike some of his contemporaries, Keegan does not just perform when the television lights are on and the notebooks are out. I spotted him at Heathrow Airport one evening early this season, sitting alone in the lounge, reading a paper and waiting for the flight home. Three or four fans approached him. They wanted autographs, which he signed, and they wanted to wish him luck, which he accepted graciously, and then they wanted a quick chat about the week-end's matches, which he gave them willingly, looking them in the eyes and making them feel as though they were part of his world. Which, of course, they are.

They have a nice life, people like Keegan and Ferguson, whose new salary is reported to be around £500,000 a year. But we know that such comfort carries a price-tag. Take Luis Fernandez, the gifted young coach of Paris Saint-Germain, who once played alongside Platini, Tigana and Giresse in the best midfield France has produced. His PSG are second in the French league, their home crowds have risen from 28,000 to 37,000 during his two years in charge, and tomorrow they play Rapid Vienna in the final of the Cup Winners' Cup. Yet Fernandez is stepping down and taking next year off, fearing a heart attack at 36, listening to his wife's warnings about the perils of stress.

AND at AC Milan Fabio Capello is moving on after leading the club to a fourth Serie A title in five years. Capello, 49, has spent those years managing the transition from the Gullit-Rijkaard-Van Basten era but now, having kept a huge squad of expensive stars reasonably happy, he is fed up with falling to get straight answers from Silvio Berlusconi and his footballing consigliere Adriano Galliani. Leaving behind him a squad admirably placed to challenge for next season's European Cup, he is moving to Spain, where Lorenzo Sanz, the ambitious president of Real Madrid, is expecting similar feats.

Men like Keegan, Fernandez and Capello are the reason I can't get interested in fantasy football games. Watching their struggles, real life seems quite enough.

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Set by Shed

Across

- 4 Work out 2 divided by 500 (6)
- 6 Spirit of war? Magna Carta embodies it (8)
- 9 Weep about man on point of being jovial (6)
- 10 Bright as silver but going to waste (8)
- 11 Not the distaff side of oriental philosopher? (11)
- 15 Not trading; therefore receiving business qualification (7)
- 17 A blemish in Mother's make-up (7)
- 19 Symptomatic relief is little consolation (4,7)
- 22 Well trained for love, perverted, about to perish (8)
- 23 The party's over — spoon-bender interrupts solemn occasion (6)

Down

- 1 Butler fell on beetle (6)
- 2 Cat and corgi I'm training to make you laugh and cry (5-5)
- 3 Replicas of supporters (8)
- 4 Beginning of writer is late to get coal (8)
- 5 Robe for jockey at length obtaining a degree (8)
- 7,21 Pay attention to raised stick, even (4,4)
- 8 see 20
- 12 Take a vote on man becoming like God (10)
- 13 Plant going zero distance under water (8)
- 14 Worker — one left in the union's a frustrated character (8)

16 Elder, crocus and edelweiss heads in flower by the fence (8)

19 Pout about ship in the foam (6)

20,8 Heads take heart from winning number (3,5)

21 see 7

Solution tomorrow

Stuck? Then call our solutions line on 0800 328 2008. Calls cost 30p per min, cheap rate, 40p per min at other times. Service supplied by ATS

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